

A Cinematic Nation:
Representation, Regionalism, and the National Question in Postwar Italy

By
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Introduction: Imagined Italies—Cinema, Nation, Narration

On a map, it seems so practical, so commonsensical. A seven-hundred mile long peninsula bound on its lone continental side by Europe's tallest mountain range should yield the formation of a "natural" nation. Yet it has not. Italy today in many ways still remains how Klemens von Metternich imagined it in 1847: "only a geographical expression."¹

A common misconception is that Italy has been a cohesive political and cultural state since the Renaissance, or even since the Roman Empire. This is partly because the legacies of these periods have been co-opted by Western Civilization as a whole. Lost is the fact that the Italian North and South had drastically different experiences during both these periods, and that from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, the entire peninsula was controlled by multiple foreign powers. Unified Italy is less than one hundred and fifty years old and, possibly more astonishing, the modern democratic republic formed only in 1948—a year after India.

Since unification, Italian nationalism has struggled with an inbetweenness of identity. Although economic conditions (the seventh largest GDP in the world) render it an international power, Italy is considered a "second-tier" state in the European Union (EU) because of an inefficient and corrupt political system and relatively high unemployment rate. According to the EU, the Italian South is also one of the most prominent "problem regions" in all of Europe. Along with its Latin and Mediterranean heritage, the country's proximity to Africa underscores imaginations of it as a land caught between the two continents. Moreover, Italians are also locked in a temporal limbo between the resonance of their ancient history and the ephemerality of the present.

Perhaps it should be no surprise then, that Italians have internalized their inbetweenness into a longstanding dualism between a “progressive” North and a “backward” South. In fact, the country has been so caught between the cultural and political remnants from the past and the realignments fostered by contemporary processes of globalization that nationalism has loomed like a carrot on a stick: always in sight, but never in reach.

A Tale of Two Italies

Although cultural differences have existed for centuries between a cosmopolitan, European-oriented North and a familial, localistic South, Italy at the time of its unification in 1861 was more economically homogeneous than it is today. The economy nearly everywhere was dominated by primary-sector activities at that time. Notably, fifty-two percent of the northern population was still involved in agriculture as recently as 1940, with only twenty-two percent in industry, and only twenty-six percent in tertiary activities.² Although northern Italy on the eve of World War II was certainly more urbanized, industrialized, and connected to the rest of Europe than the entirety of the South (with the exceptions of Rome and Naples), the national economy still revolved around small-scale agriculture. The biggest contrast between regional economies at that time was small-to-medium-scale commercial agriculture in the North versus subsistence agriculture in the South. This functionality had great implications for growth potential, particularly in the ensuing postwar years.³

The contemporary landscape of a divided Italy became cemented after 1945 by rapid industrialization of the North. This region contained the majority of the country’s meager natural resources plus ninety-five percent of the rail network, an established credit system dating back to the Medici family, and proximity to northern European markets.⁴ Financial capital from the

Marshall Plan then bolstered these advantages. Scholars have noted that the use of such aid could be interpreted as a regional misappropriation of funds considering that southern Italy “was more devastated and destroyed than northern Italy during World War II.”⁵ The country’s newly formed democratic government immediately set about nationalizing steel, electronics, transportation, and communications industries. Leaders concentrated industrial development in the North because of Southern stereotypes that dated back to unification: that region’s lack of an entrepreneurial class, widespread clientelistic politics, and a societal arrangement of what sociologist Edward Banfield has called “amoral familism,” which refers to a system of localized loyalties within towns with little desire to establish mutually beneficial social and trade networks between them.⁶

The division between North and South intensified rapidly in the late 1940s as industrial growth in the North fueled Italian reconstruction and instigated the “economic miracle” of the late 1950s and early 1960s. As the neglected “Mezzogiorno” fell behind economically, Northern cultural antagonism towards the “backward” South grew proportionately [Fig. I.1].⁷ In fact, Northerners perceived that growth within their industrial triangle (Milan, Genoa, and Turin) was held from reaching even higher levels by stagnation in the South.

Statements deriding the South as a hindrance to national growth were, in fact, wrong. Contrarily, two distinct qualities of that region allowed northern growth to occur initially. First, the Southern agrarian economy was the principal supplier of urban foodstuffs nationwide. Second, and perhaps more important, the South served as the primary source for industrial labor in the North, leading to massive waves of migration. The increasing “backwardness” of the Mezzogiorno eventually led the government to attempt more balanced economic growth and particularly industrial processing. This movement was capped by the largest aid program in the

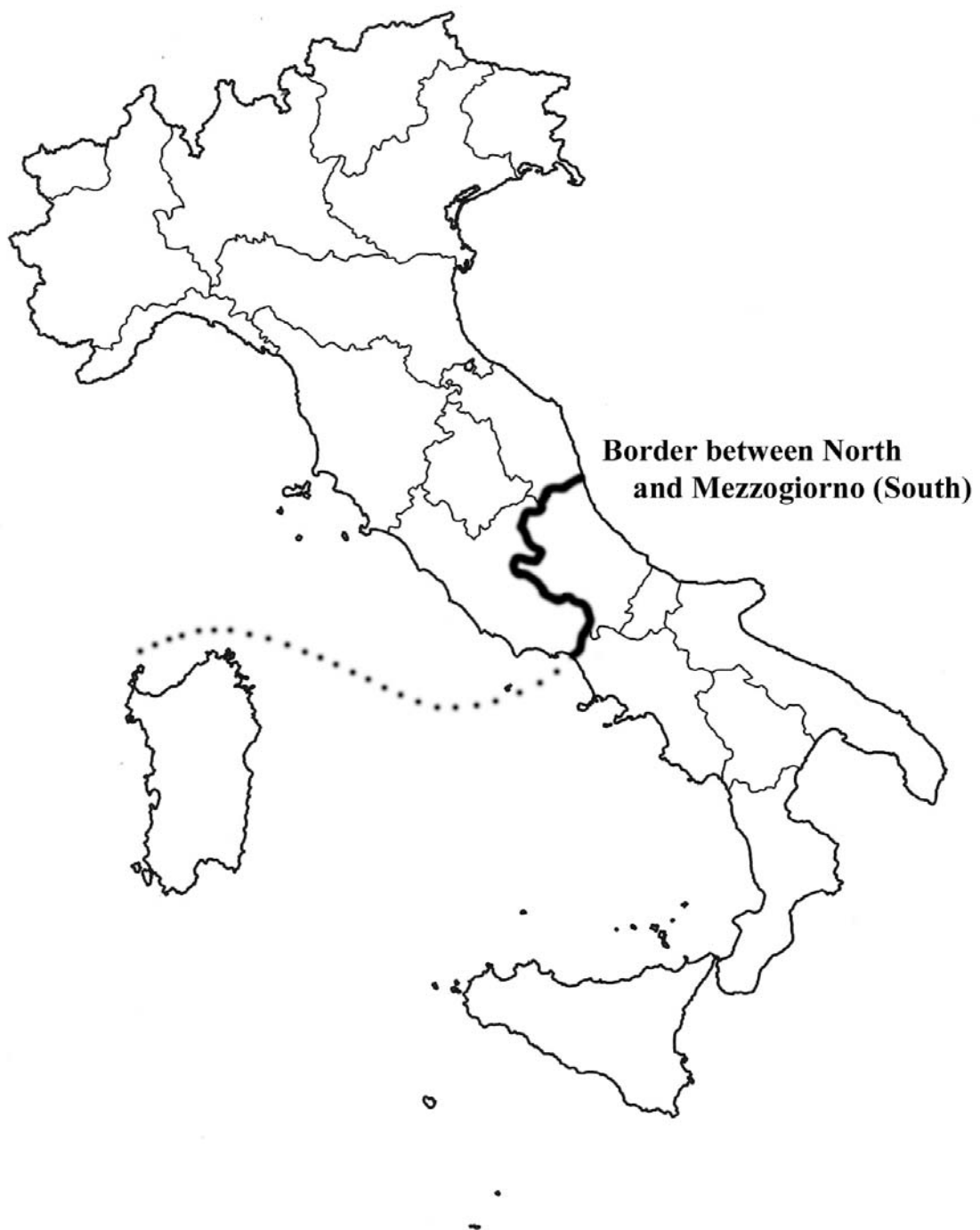


Figure I.1. The traditional border between the North and the Mezzogiorno.

country's history: the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* (Fund for the South).

In August of 1950, the Italian government passed Law 646, which distributed over ten billion dollars to the South for industrial redistribution and development in tandem with sweeping land reforms and the development of public works infrastructure. Taking large land holdings out of the hands of a small number of owners and giving this acreage to landless peasants was viewed as the first step to countering stagnation and inefficiency of the southern economy.

Land reform was viewed as a quick antidote to inefficiency in agricultural production, rising internal unemployment, and a rapidly occurring migration from the South to the North. Because efforts to fund industrialization in the South were not begun until 1957, however, southern cities lagged far behind their counterparts in the North.⁸ This vast discrepancy between a continuously emerging industrial economy in the North and a massive restructuring of agricultural lands in the South created unforeseen and undesirable consequences for both regions. The lack of employment in the South was in stark contrast to labor shortages developing in the North, and this disequilibrium set off the greatest internal migration in Italian history.

The economic miracle of northern Italy effectively ended in 1965. As the economy became besieged by rising inflation, public debt, and unemployment, officials attributed many of the troubles to the massive internal migration. Competition over employment opportunities pitted northerners against southerners and social conflicts bubbled. Political movements in the North sought to sever all ties to the South and rhetoric developed that framed the South and its people as “backward,” “wild and primitive,” “corrupt,” and an overall hindrance to Italian national growth. Put in terms of culture theory, Northern Italians were asserting the Otherness of the Mezzogiorno. This characterization had many components, including language differences,

loyalty to the family, town (*campanilismo*), and the Catholic Church, the tradition of subsistence agriculture, and the influence of organized crime. The collective image apparently served (and continues to serve) to reduce the guilt associated with subjugation and injustice while simultaneously justifying the extraction of labor and resources from areas deemed incapable of developing on their own and in their own way.

The construction of identity through regional labeling is crucial to understanding contemporary Italian political schisms and the development of a northern separatist party, the Lega Nord, that has called for an end to southern “welfare” in its quest to sever the South (or, if necessary, its northeastern stronghold, called “Padania”) from the modern State. Geographer John Agnew’s research is important in this light, for he has traced the country’s current regional fracturing back to the uneven regional development during the economic miracle. It is also interesting how modern development strategies concerning the South are still often based around the construction of the Mezzogiorno as “exotic,” “romantic,” and “frozen in time.” Tourism is a good example. International tourists are certainly targeted in this way but so are northern Italians, consistent with a strategy of reverse migration from densely populated areas of the North to the South.

The North-South dichotomy also endures via the recent emergence of a “Third” Italy comprising the regions of Tuscany, Marche, Umbria, and Lazio. These areas are united more by differences they have constructed between themselves and the traditional North and South than by any internal cohesion. Their new alliance has fueled smaller-scale allegiances that have resulted in a greater number of regional-level drives for special autonomous political status. Such standing has been granted to only five of the twenty Italian regions (Valle d’Aosta, Trentino-Alto Adige, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Sicily, and Sardinia) but the push is ongoing.

The Role of Cinema in Postwar Italian Culture

This dissertation explores the role of film in the creation of regional identities and disparities. I ask how particular Italian film genres represent and contest the realities of specific postwar social, political, and economic cycles. The traditional stereotypes of the North and the South are mythologized in Italian cinema and filmmakers subvert these descriptions in complex and revealing ways.

Marcia Landy has bluntly asserted that, “distinctions between the northern and southern landscapes of the nation are common in the iconography of the Italian cinema.”⁹ This division is not surprising, of course, because it is predicated on vast regional differences in ethnicity, tradition, and language, as well as the dualistic nature of urban versus rural, industrial versus agrarian, and country versus city. More particularly, a basic correlation in Italian film can be made between the development of thematically united genres and the reality of socioeconomic change that informed creation, representation, and imagination of postwar Italian regionalism.

The advent of film neorealism in the immediate postwar years can be viewed as a definitive backlash to the propagandist nationalist productions that had characterized the earlier Fascist period. Neorealist films focus on naturalism in terms of lighting, subject matter, the use of nonactors, and a reduction in romanticism. As the term indicates, neorealism is bound by an ideology of realism in which narrative constructions are often downplayed in favor of presentations more akin to the documentation of social, cultural, and political truth. Critic Andre Bazin characterized neorealist cinema as united by “realistic treatment, popular setting, social content, historical actuality, and political commitment.”¹⁰ Films such as Roberto Rossellini’s *Roma, città aperta* (Rome: Open City, 1945), *Paisà* (Paisan, 1946), and *Stromboli, terra di dio* (Stromboli, Land of God, 1950); Vittorio De Sica’s *Sciuscià* (Shoeshine, 1946) and *Ladri di*

biciclette (The Bicycle Thief, a.k.a. Bicycle Thieves, 1948); and Luchino Visconti's *La terra trema* (The Earth Trembles, 1948) are connected by their examination of pressing postwar problems within Italian society—the effects of the war, poverty, labor unrest, migration from the South, organized crime, and the complexities of nationalism following Fascism. As chapter two presents, neorealism embodies a rejection of an authoritarian approach to nationalism via cooptation and translation of numerous visual tropes of Fascist cinema. Neorealist directors frequently were aligned (and financed by) the Italian Communist Party (PCI), and the ideological message of many films reflects an attempt to posit a new sense of nationalism based on proletarian unity.

Whereas neorealism projected the socioeconomic realities of postwar plight and reconstruction, the *commedia all'italiana* (Italian-style comedy) genre explored the drastic economic and social alterations instigated by the economic miracle. The majority of the *commedie all'italiana* confront the shock of Italy's rapid modernization through a comic juxtaposition of an emerging secularized, consumer-based, and urban culture in the North with a traditional and antiquated parochialism in the South. In chapter four, I examine the ways that, as depicted in *commedia all'italiana* films, the transformative aspects of industrialization, economic growth, and consumption are rendered the progressive bases of the modern nation, and how the South, as a consequence, is reinforced as static, backward, and antimodern.

Concurrent with the *commedia all'italiana* of the late 1950s and early 1960s was the development of what has been variously referred to as the “cerebral decade,” the “existential period,” and “auteur cinema,”—the focus of chapter five. This period saw the emergence of directors Federico Fellini, Michelangelo Antonioni, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Francesco Rosi, as well as the transitional efforts of Rossellini and Visconti. Although auteur films are characterized

by their innovations in formal techniques and narrative construction that imbue a degree of theoretical abstraction, the topics that they engage are rooted in the everyday realities of the modernizing nation. Many deal with dimensions of contemporary marriage, moral degradation, and personal despair. Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* (The Sweet Life, 1960) and Antonioni's *L'avventura* (The Adventure, 1960) and *Il deserto rosso* (The Red Desert, 1964) focus on the emotional milieu of the growing middle class and cultural elite in the prosperous times of the economic miracle. Issues of alienation, unfulfilling decadence, and urban anomie are central to these works; they lay bare the individualistic obsession of consumer society.

Fellini and Antonioni predominantly focused on transformations in urban and northern life while Pasolini and Rosi entertained greater concerns for the southern peasantry and proletariat. Landy, for example, has viewed Pasolini's films as offering "a perspective on modernity and capitalism from the vantage point of subaltern groups" as evidenced by the proletarian protagonists of *Accattone* (1961), *Mamma Roma* (1962), and *Uccellacci e uccellini* (Hawks and Sparrows, 1966).¹¹ The treatment of peasant life, regional dualism, conflicts between urban and rural existence, familism, and the impact of modernization on nationalism all serve as means to question Italian history and to devise an expanded theory of cultural politics where social and political change are analyzed in terms of hegemony, common sense, and folklore. The works of Pasolini and Rosi are the most acute examples of "film inquests"—Cesare Zavattini's term for politically charged films that utilize and transform the cinematic codes of neorealism as a means to challenge dominant representations of Italianness.

Other auteur films and directors of the 1960s were also essential to emerging politicized portraits of the North and South. Visconti's *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (Rocco and His Brothers, 1960) centers on the migration of southern Italians to northern industrial areas and the

subsequent clash between differing value systems. Vittorio De Seta's *Banditi a Orgosolo* (Bandits of Orgosolo, 1960) examines the persistence of Sardinian banditry in the mid-twentieth century, positing the phenomenon as a rational response of the poor to economic marginalization.

The 1960s also saw a growth in films that specifically targeted southern audiences. Chapter six explores this new “cinema for the South” that was centered on *filoni*—formula films with serial tendencies that were made quickly and cheaply owing to a repetition of sets, stars, directors, and costumes. One part of this, the peplum (historical-mythological epic) genre, produced some of the most profitable and popular films of all time, thanks in large part to their appeal to the *terza visione* (third screening) audiences throughout the rural South. The success of the peplum films fostered the “spaghetti” and Marxist westerns of the 1960s and early 1970s that corresponded with the decline of the economic miracle. Rather than simply being Italian imitations of American predecessors, spaghetti westerns deconstructed myths of modernization through the older lens of the frontier. The western setting served as an appropriate arena to entertain and dissect social issues that historically have plagued the South and to react to the unevenness of Italian economic development and its subsequent disenfranchisement. The role of violence in the making of the modern nation, industrial blight, corruption, familial disintegration as a result of “progress,” and a rise in individualism are all central themes in these films. The Marxist, or “Zapata” variants injected revolutionary ideology into the western via a focus on peasant resistance and armed struggle. Given that this subgenre coincided with a period of widespread social unrest and revolt throughout Europe and the developing world, the correlation of the Italian South as a “postcolonial” space in the Zapata films reflected broader critiques of capitalism, nationalism, and imperialism.

As evident from the titles mentioned above, I am concerned primarily with films produced from the end of World War II to the mid-1970s. There are three reasons for this. First, they mirror the most volatile social and economic phases of postwar Italy, a period that ended dramatically with the oil shocks and global economic crises of the early 1970s. Second, a dismemberment of the Italian film industry during the mid-1970s caused largely by the global economic crisis of that time led to a substantial decline in the number of Italian film productions. This was coupled with a deregulation of television in 1976 that greatly reduced attendance at movie houses throughout the peninsula and effectively ended cinema's reign as the most popular visual medium. Third, the devolution of powers from the central government to the regions reduced the importance of framing the South as antithetical to northern progress. The subsequent rise of a "Third" Italy comprising areas in central and northeastern parts of the nation also brought into question the relevance of the nation's historic dualism. Cinematic representations and contestations of the "Southern Question" were replaced by an emphasis on internationalism characteristic of Italian films of the 1980s and 1990s. These causes and effects of "the end of cinema" are contextualized in chapter seven.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Three primary intents underscore this research. First, I hope to illustrate, via the postwar Italian example, the necessity of incorporating analyses of the sociocultural and political functionality of cinema into historical geographies of twentieth-century place. As Richard Slotkin has suggested, the development of cinema in the 1900s, more so than any other visual medium, is tied to:

a pattern of reciprocal influence in which the preoccupations of politics shape the concerns and imagery of movies, and in which movies in turn transmit their shapely formulations of those concerns back to political discourse, where they function as devices for clarifying values and imagining policy scenarios.¹²

For several decades prior to the midcentury expansion of television, cinema was the principle mode of visual communication open to all strata of the population, in both developed and underdeveloped countries. As a result, articulations of mass consumption, place iconography, and social change attributed to modernization, postcolonialism, and globalization can rely on film as a primary resource. Cinema—as an industry, art form, and communicative tool—marks the intersection of the economic, social, and political aspects of everyday life more concretely than any other medium.

I also want to encourage other geographers investigating media, particularly those examining film, to see the explanatory power and contextual value of genres. This is not to downplay the merits of geographical analyses of individual films and directors. But studies of genre are more appropriate for elucidating the persistent ideological representations of place that are associated with specific stages of social and political transition. The postwar Italian experience indicates how genre development is determined as much by consumers as by producers. Shifts in genre popularity can be viewed as reflecting changes not only in cultural tastes, but also in the ideological tactics involved in the struggle between sustainment (hegemonic), metamorphosis (position), and rebirth (maneuver) of dominant forms of representation.

Finally, I intend to suggest that, in the social construction of geographic scale, regions are the most complex conceptualization. Whereas the *primary* determinants of other scales are relatively fixed—the local by social relations (the “lived” experiences of the everyday); the

national by politics (the administrative borders of the nation-state); and the global by economics (the fluidity of capital and labor)—regional boundaries and affiliations are amorphous and in constant flux. The region is the most “imagined community” in that its invocation is equally responsive to social, political, and economic rhetoric that seeks to solidify or fragment the power of opposing scales. In terms of identity, it is difficult to pinpoint the advantages of allegiance to the regional, and it is rare that such identification prevails over the local or national. As the legacy of the modern Italian State indicates, regions occupy an ‘interpretive middle ground between exclusionary national histories and endless local narratives.’¹³ As such, regional divisions are conjured as a means to both synthesize and mediate representational differences between the national and local.

Three modes of intellectual thought are particularly useful to this analytical inquiry: film theory, sociocultural criticism, and cultural geography. Previous attempts to describe, explain, and evaluate the selective construction and subsequent implications of film on general culture have included a wide spectrum of perspectives. These range from the aesthetic (e.g. Rudolph Arnheim, *Film as Art*, 1957), anthropological (e.g. John Collier, *Visual Anthropology*, 1967), linguistic (e.g. Brenda Bollag, “Words on the Screen: The Problem of the Linguistic Sign in Cinema,” 1988), and psychological (e.g. Martha Wolfenstein and Nathan Leites, *Movies: A Psychological Study*, 1950), to Marxist (e.g. Mas’Ud Zavarzadeh, *Seeing Films Politically*, 1991) and, more recently, postmodernist (e.g. Fredric Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic*, 1992).¹⁴ Within film studies, semiotics has become a particularly well-developed approach to understanding meaning. As Jeff Hopkins (a geographer) has noted: “the semiotic approach has contributed greatly to our understanding of the structure or ‘language’ of film, the constitution of the film image or sign, and the communicative processes of film.”¹⁵

Although such geographical concepts as “space,” “place,” and “landscape” have been employed by film theorists, very little cinematic work has been done by geographers.¹⁶ This is strange in several ways, for landscape painting, literary landscapes, and landscape photographs are established areas of research in cultural geography.¹⁷ Yet, as Hopkins has stated:

Exploring the realm of cinema, perhaps the most popular and accessible mode of visual representation in contemporary society with the exception of television, is not a radical departure from more conventional landscape studies; it is a reasonable augmentation of our principal interest in the “scaping” of our world.¹⁸

The most notable geographical exploration to date of cinema and its ties to identity and the construction of place is a 1994 collection of essays *Place, Power, Situation, and Spectacle: A Geography of Film*, edited by Stuart Aitken and Leo Zonn. The underlying theme of these variegated investigations is “the way spaces are used and places are portrayed in film [to] reflect prevailing cultural norms, ethical mores, societal structures and ideologies.” The usefulness of such endeavors is rooted in the realization that “the impact of a film on an audience can mold social, cultural, and environmental experience,” to which I would add in light of my intended study, the *historical* experience as well. A primary concern of the authors is the intrinsic spatiality of representation and the hegemony of the visual image as part of our social subconscious.¹⁹

The fifteen years since the Aitken and Zonn publication have seen only modest new work on film done by geographers, leaving as still true their statement that “the study of the interrelations between film and the politics of social and cultural representation offers a provocative research setting for geographers, and yet the subject is virtually ignored by the discipline.”²⁰ A fair amount of interest has surfaced very recently, however, as seen by a new specialty group on “communication geography” within the American Association of

Geographers, the creation of *Aether: The Journal of Media Geography*, thematic issues of *GeoJournal* and *The Journal of Geography* on the potential uses of film, and a number of essays that entertain geographical issues *in* films.²¹ The majority of work thus far is centered on singular films and directors, theoretical readings of formal tropes (techniques and iconography), and/or on the economic mechanisms of the cinema industry. Also, the scale on which place is being examined occupies both extremes of the spectrum, from the local examination of the city to the global, but with little inbetween. This dissertation helps to move the field beyond such limitations.

In order to contextualize film and genre development, a backdrop of national and regional history is needed, especially in its postwar cultural and economic aspects. A detailed historical account of the various strategies of framing the South in the postunification period, presented in chapter one, provides this context. The underlying economic, social, and political characteristics of Italy's economic miracle—outlined in chapter three—add vigor to an historicization of cinema intended to liberate film criticism from the binds of aesthetic abstraction. Analyses of Italian demographics, economic growth, cinema-industry infrastructure, and box-office revenues provide empirical evidence that supports assertions about regional differences in cinema attendance and taste, and the degree of popular dissemination and resonance of individual films and genres. Through a critical reading of the films themselves, framed by dissection of such components as form (the technical production elements of filmmaking); narrative (the construction and organization of subject matter); language (the various directorial motivations and characteristics ascribed to shot construction, setting, camera positioning and aspect, and editing); and sign (the semiotic deconstruction of image and icon) I elucidate the principal tactics used to communicate particular ideological viewpoints concerning postwar transformations.

Although I utilize a methodological reading of films and directors similar to approaches established by other geographers, I also attempt to view film through a sociospatial lens that complements and enhances traditional formalist and auteurist lines of critique. This is specifically true in my holistic examination of popular genres as indicators of predominant cultural and political trends that define specific phases of postwar development and changes in the conceptual framing of the North and South.

A template for my approach lies in the exhaustive research previously done by nongeographers. The impact of the American “western” on regional identity, for instance, has been critically examined by film critics.²² However, the greatest contribution to this field is by Richard Slotkin, a historian. His *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* seeks to show how cinema (in this case the western) has cemented and transformed ideas about American nation-building in relation to specific socioeconomic periods of the last century.²³ Tantamount to this exploration is a concern for the politics of myth. Slotkin’s suggestion that “within the structured marketplace of myths, the continuity and persistence of particular genres may be seen as keys to identifying the culture’s deepest and most persistent concerns,” can be translated to the critical analysis of postwar Italian films and their impact on the construction of regional identity.²⁴

Film theorist Angelo Restivo provides additional inspiration in his book, *The Cinema of Economic Miracles: Visuality and Modernization in the Italian Art Film*.²⁵ Although he relies heavily on postmodern cultural and film theory, Restivo presents a lucid and powerful contextualization of postwar Italian cinema and its connection to “the processes of political and economic reorganization that (re)constructed the nation into the Italy we know today; and . . . to the larger and more ‘invisible’ processes that have marked the transformation of global

capitalism in the postwar period.”²⁶ Whereas Restivo’s focus is on “canonical art films”—specifically the works of Pasolini and Antonioni—I am concerned equally with popular, formulaic cinema. I also deviate from his emphasis on economic change at the national level by concentrating on the sociopolitical implications of visual representations of the South.

The social theory of Antonio Gramsci is an additional anchorpoint for this research. Arrested in 1926 by Mussolini’s Fascist regime for his involvement with the Communist Party, Gramsci spent twelve incarcerated years producing a vast set of writings on Italian politics and culture. Most notable for me are his ideas concerning the Southern Question, in which he examines the disparate historical development between northern and southern Italy and the subsequent failure of the Risorgimento, Liberal-era nationalism, and Fascism to truly unite the country. Inherent in his work is a critical examination of power relations and hegemony in the spheres of politics and popular culture. A thorough treatment of Gramsci’s importance to postwar Italian thought, cultural production, and politics by Marcia Landy—*Film, Politics, and Gramsci*—serves as a crucial resource for placing Gramscian thinking in modern context.²⁷ Gramsci’s writings emphasize the importance of viewing mass culture as an arena for affirmation and opposition, as a central facet of modern life, and a primary vehicle for the transmission of concepts of inclusion and exclusion. His concerns with intellectuals, education, and “good” versus “common” sense suggest that the media is an increasingly important source for the production and dissemination of knowledge. Stuart Hall’s and Edward Said’s treatment of Gramsci in their works on the media and identity also offer excellent frameworks for placing this scholar’s ideas in a geographic and modern perspective.²⁸ Linkages among the hegemonic nature of popular culture production, film genre, and socially accepted ideas concerning nationalism and regionalism are important relationships to establish.

Gramsci's writings were not published until 1948 and were not disseminated nationally and internationally until the mid-1950s. As a result, the impact of his work coincides with the "new cinema" period. Landy has gone so far as to suggest that "no other figure's ideas played such a large role in the development of post-World War II Italian cinema."²⁹ Indeed, Gramsci's ghost haunts the ideological underpinnings of contestatory and southernist films of the entire postwar period, from neorealism and the "film inquests" of Pasolini and Francesco Rosi to the Zapata westerns of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Along with the aforementioned work by geographers, the writings of John Agnew greatly inform this research. Agnew has examined contemporary Italian politics and their relation to regional constructions within a framework of social theory. His work is indebted to Gramsci, of course, and also the writings of several other geographers, including Peter Jackson, Don Mitchell, Denis Cosgrove, and James and Nancy Duncan.³⁰ These scholars add credence to the examination of culture as a continuously contested process rife with political motivations and struggles over power both physically (in terms of spatial divisions and antagonisms) and psychologically (the social conscience). Such ideas have direct correlations to Gramsci's writings about power, the implications inherent in the production of culture industries, and how hegemonic structures of mass media are mediated by the construction of oppositional identities.

Although it may seem odd, Joseph A. Conforti's book, *Imagining New England: Explorations of Regional Identity from the Pilgrims to the Mid-Twentieth Century*, has also been a valuable source of inspiration.³¹ In approaching "regional identity as the cultural terrain where the imagined and historic 'interpenetrate,'" Conforti illustrates how impressions of New England as a natural and static culture region reflect the way "discourses of regional distinctiveness. . . established cultural and conceptual order on a dynamic place that did not define itself."³² In

examining the role of popular print media in the construction of New England's uniqueness, Conforti affirms how "visual images accumulated over time distill the perceived cultural essence that defines regional identity."³³ *Imagining New England* also attests to the tenuous nature of regional divisions, given that defining characteristics are determined as much by exogenous comparisons as by endogenous practices. Thus, regional identities are prone to episodic reassessment and reinvention in relation to alterations of opposing regions and scales.

For postwar Italy, no portrait is complete without including the role of film in constructions of national unity, since the history of Italian cinema *is* the history of the making of the modern state.

Chapter 1

The Southern Question and the Roots of Modern Italian Regionalism

With Italy made, we must now make the Italians.

Massimo D'Azeglio

Italy will be whatever the Mezzogiorno will be.¹

Giuseppe Mazzini

Spoken shortly after the general election for the first Italian Parliament in 1861, D'Azeglio's comment on the monumental task of creating a united state is arguably the most quoted line in histories of modern Italy. Certainly the experience of the Italian state since then often is viewed as a series of failures—as “incomplete” or “passive” revolutions that fell short of constructing a truly populist form of nationalism based on civic consciousness and a collective sociocultural identification with *italianità* (Italianness). The suggested need to “make” Italians alludes to two goals of the first unified Italian government that continued to resurface throughout the twentieth century: the creation of a top-down version of unification devised by a narrow group of political elites, and the reduction of daunting social, political, and economic difference at the micro- and macroregional scales.

A central hindrance to the newly unified state related strongly to the divergent ways in which northern and southern Italy were incorporated. Consolidation of northern territories was largely driven by the independence movement generated within the Kingdom of Sardinia (centered in Piedmont) under the direction of King Victor Emmanuel II and his Prime Minister Count Camillo Benso di Cavour. Following the failure to oust the Austrian Empire from Piedmont, Lombardy, Venetia, and Tuscany in the First Italian War of Independence in 1848, Cavour orchestrated a partnership with Napoleon III in 1858 to renew the same quest. With the aid of Napoleon's troops, the Sardinian army forced Austria to hand over Lombardy to the

French, who then traded it to the Kingdom of Sardinia in exchange for Nice and Savoy. With the campaign deposing Austrian rulers from the central regions as well, the Duchies of Parma, Tuscany, Modena, and Romagna voted in 1860 to join the Kingdom of Sardinia, thus completing the Second War of Italian Independence. The last piece of the northern puzzle, Venetia, was ceded to the Kingdom of Italy by France following the Third War of Independence, which coincided with Italian involvement in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866.

Whereas the northern regions were consolidated via internally generated revolutionary wars (albeit achieved only with external support), the southern territories comprising the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies were liberated from Bourbon rule and subsequently integrated into the new nation by the military forces of the North. Giuseppe Garibaldi, who had played an important role in the Second Italian War of Independence, embarked on his campaign of *i mille* (the thousand) at Sicily in April 1860.² After taking the island, Garibaldi crossed the Straits of Messina and gathered thousands more volunteer soldiers before marching on Naples, the capital of Bourbon territory. He gained control of the city easily, but the defeat of the Neapolitan army was accomplished only after Piedmontese troops arrived from the north to assist. Along the way, this Piedmontese army had captured the Papal States of Marche and Umbria but not Rome and surrounding Lazio.³ Despite being forbidden to take Rome by Count Cavour and Victor Emmanuel II (who feared an altercation with France), Garibaldi then relinquished control of the Two Sicilies to the king, and Victor Emmanuel II formed the Kingdom of Italy on March 17, 1861 [Fig. 1.1].



Figure 1.1. The Unification of Italy, 1815-1870. William Shepherd. *Historical Atlas*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911.

For a considerable number of southerners, political incorporation into the Kingdom of Italy amounted to little more than a transfer of their subordination from one foreign monarch to another. Instead of a democratic system of representation based on universal suffrage and federalist principles, the new state simply expanded the Piedmontese constitutional monarchy throughout the peninsula. Perceived as a continuation of external occupation, attempts to establish Piedmont law in the South were met with widespread rebellion. Between 1861 and 1866, hundreds of incidents occurred, primarily in Puglia, Molise, Basilicata, Campania, and Sicily. The North, in response, sent in over a hundred and twenty thousand troops to squash brigandage in the South, an endeavor known as the War of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. As John Dickie has noted, this conflict served as a precursor to North-South relations in the postunification period for, “without having a declared beginning or end, the war continued for almost a decade, cost more lives than all other battles of unification put together, and at its peak in 1863 necessitated the deployment of about two-fifths of the effective strength of the Italian army.”⁴ An actual political-geographical unification of Italy was only realized in 1870, after the successful capture of Rome and the containment, at least for a brief period, of southern insurrection.

That the incorporation of the southern half of the peninsula and Sicily into the nation was accomplished by force instead of consent speaks to only part of the “Italian problem.” When the Kingdom of Italy was created, the peninsula and the islands of Sardinia and Sicily contained twenty-two million people. However, the electorate totaled only five hundred thousand, less than three percent of the populace, and all of these voters resided in the North.⁵ Cavour’s Italian Liberal Party (PLI) maintained a dominant position within parliament from 1861 to World War I despite fracturing into rightist (*Liberal-Conservatori*) and leftist (*Sinistra Liberale*) branches in

the 1870s.⁶ The only tangible threat to the party's hegemony during what is now known as the Liberal Period (1870-1915) was mounted by the Italian Republican Party (PRI) near the turn of the century.⁷ Founded to honor the principles of Giuseppe Mazzini, the PRI sought to convert the centralized state from constitutional monarchy to democratic republic. What is essential to note, however, is that, regardless of ideological differences, all officials in the national government during the Liberal Period came from the same sociopolitical class. Even though suffrage was expanded in 1882 to include twenty-eight percent of the male population, educational qualifications barred the vast majority of southerners from the process. In fact, only seven percent of the entire population of the Mezzogiorno was eligible to vote in 1910.⁸

Incorporation of the South into the national economy and social network was at least as perplexing as equitable electoral representation. Bourbon rule firmly entrenched *latifondismo* in the South—a system of economic production and social relations that combined elements of feudalism and small-market capitalism. At the center were *latifondi*, immense landed estates that each controlled thousands of people, overseeing employment and wages, extension of credit, access to legal and medical services and state institutions, enforcement of taxation, and the dispersal of force. At the time of Garibaldi's conquest, an estimated seventy-five percent of the employed population of the Two Sicilies was classifiable as peasant (subsistence), sharecropper, or day-laborer (*braccianti*).⁹ It was an inefficient agrarian economy predominantly based on extensive agriculture with little industrial development outside of localized metallurgical, mining, and handcraft endeavors centered in Naples and Palermo. Some citrus crops and grains were exported to France, Spain, and North America, but ties to northern Italian markets were virtually nonexistent.¹⁰ Any attempt to overcome this void was hindered by competition with the established intensive-commercial agriculture of the North.

The majority of southerners at the time of unification were rural, poverty-stricken, and illiterate. The first two of these conditions suited Bourbon rulers, for their ability to control the region hinged greatly upon the subordination of the masses via collusion with a small class of landowners. The substantial illiteracy rate (estimated at eighty percent in 1870), in contrast, had more to do with the absence of Bourbon action—in other words, their lack of institutional promotion. The rulers left educational provision entirely to the Catholic Church, and this responsibility was retained throughout the Liberal Period since the State lacked the resources to start its own secular system.¹¹ Together, these conditions contributed to a pervasive and disintegrative social system of “parochial familism,” whereby preservation of the traditional family was paramount and any sense of civic allegiance was limited to the local level.

Mazzini’s prognosis that began this chapter stands as one of the first identifications of the Southern Question. Taken at face value, his suggestion that the nation will be no stronger than its weakest part is lucidly pragmatic. The incorporation/assimilation of the South into an Italy constructed in the image of the North exists as the central determining factor for the achievement of national unity. As a consequence, the Southern Question acts as both a regional and national issue. A deeper understanding of Mazzini’s politics, however, reveals his comment as more of an apocryphal warning to the liberal-controlled government. An ardent proponent of democratic republicanism, Mazzini was dismayed by extension of the constitutional monarchy to the new nation. He argued that unification without the participation of the masses was doomed to fail. Perhaps more apropos was his disdain for the Liberal Party’s treatment of the South. He saw this as “nothing short of wanton imperialism,” in which “the desire to enrich themselves at the expense of millions is justified by brutally imagining the peoples of the Mezzogiorno as savage and foreign children incapable of directing their own salvation.”¹²

Constructing an image of the Mezzogiorno as a colonial space outside the “real” Italy was a central facet of the nationalist strategy enacted by the Liberal Party. Such a framing strengthened northern claims of superiority and rationalized southern dependency and subordination. However, representing the Mezzogiorno as a socioeconomic Other in this way highlights a great paradox of Italian nationalism, for “the way that the representatives of the new national order conceived of the South as alien to an imagined Italian nation was part of the process in which it was incorporated into the Italian state.”¹³ Although initiated during the Liberal Period, this core/periphery relationship between the regions has persisted throughout all major political eras since unification, and is still evident today. At the very least, the North-South dynamic reinforces the notion of geographic scale as social constructed, and the nation-state itself as an “imagined community” instead of a simple physical-geographical reality.¹⁴

The South of the South: The Mezzogiorno in Italy and Europe

Even though the Southern Question “has been taken to emblemize the problem of state formation since 1859,” recent scholarship has challenged whether it is any longer relevant to the modern Italian state.¹⁵ One economist has gone so far as to call for “abolishing the Mezzogiorno” altogether, viewing the delineation as no longer viable given the considerable economic development of the South since 1950.¹⁶ Certainly globalization, via the expansion of neoliberal capitalism and transportation, communication, and technology networks, has diminished the primacy of the nation-state. The growth of European supranationalism, epitomized by the European Union (EU), has similarly encouraged the transfer of allegiance and economic competitiveness away from the national level to the continental, regional, and local. These factors, coupled with cultural and economic assimilation over the last fifty years, seemingly

depreciate the importance of national unity and therefore the need to perpetuate the negative framing of the South.

However, for Italy, membership in the EU has reawakened internal regional antagonisms. The paradox of European supranationalism is that, while nations have become politically integrated, economic disparities between regions have intensified. As Benito Giordano has acknowledged, EU membership has recreated the post-World War II divide between North and South as “the implementation of policies designed to reduce barriers to free-trade in pursuit of a level European ‘playing field’ have actually contributed to a divergence in regional economic imbalances”¹⁷ In accordance with the goal of creating a Europe “of the regions” as opposed to a Europe “of the nations,” the EU formed the Committee of European Regions (COR) in 1994. In theory, COR involved a devolution of power, as regions were granted direct access to decision making and policy formation. The agency devised Regional Development Plans (RDP) for the poorest regions, a classification that befell the Mezzogiorno. Not surprisingly, the language of the RDP for the Italian South resembled that of the postwar *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*. Both called for reform of the agricultural sector, subsidies for industrial development, and promotion of the South’s supposed competitive advantage in tourism.

To many northerners, the RDP amounted to little more than a continuation of welfaristic handouts to the South, a view epitomized by the Lega Nord (Northern League, LN) political party.¹⁸ Formed in 1991, the general platform of the LN centers on the transformation of Italy into a federalist republic. At times, the party has advocated succession of the northern regions to form an autonomous nation called “Padania.” In other moments it has been less extreme, calling for the division of Italy into three semiautonomous macroregions called Padania, Etruria, and Sud. Since the formation of the EU, LN officials have frequently used the Union’s phrase the

“Europe of the regions” and the policies of COR to justify their political goals. The rhetoric is markedly antisouthern in tone, as summarized by a statement from the longtime leader of the LN, Umberto Bossi: “There is a cultural battle going on in this country: between the efficient, European culture of Milan and the culture of institutional inefficiency and collaboration between mafia and politics in Palermo.”¹⁹ Other representatives of the LN have been even less restrained, and their entire campaign has always been acutely aware of the importance of the media in constructing a derogatory image of the South.²⁰

The coincidence of European supranationalism and the regional autonomist movement of the LN is indicative of today’s amorphous image of the Italian state. On the global scale, Italy is considered one of the most advanced countries in the world. At the continental level, however, it is seen as backward compared to its northern counterparts, stigmatized as “Mediterranean” and thereby tied to Spain, Portugal, Greece, Turkey, and even northern Africa. This negative perception of Italy as *Europe’s* “South” is framed as the fault of the country’s *internal* South. The approach of the LN to this problem is essentially to sever the Mezzogiorno from the true “European Italy” by giving the region “back to Africa where it firmly belongs.”²¹ Such rhetoric is extreme but powerful and has led John Agnew to assert that: “The Northern League may be the first authentic European postmodern territorial political movement in its *self-conscious* manipulation of territorial image to create a sense of cultural-economic difference within an existing state.”²²

The reason I mention this contemporary example of the resurgence of regionalism is to highlight the enduring nature and political relevance of derogatory images of the South generated from the North (of Italy and Europe). Still viewed as the “ball and chain” that prevents the nation from claiming its position as international superpower, the South is rendered incapable of

devising its own identity and unable to transform its feudal economy and antiquated social customs. My point for this chapter and those that follow is to illuminate the representational patterns used to depict the South that have persisted through all major episodes of political reorganization since the Risorgimento. Although my focus is the first half of the Republican era (1945-1975), my intention is to illustrate the “vicious cycle” of southern stereotyping that has developed from Unification, the Liberal Period, and Fascism to the emergence of regional autonomy and the “Third Italy” in the 1970s and the macroregional secessionist movements of the 1990s. In the one hundred and fifty years since formation of the modern state, the South has consistently been reproduced as the cause of Italy’s weak sense of nationalism.

Although the ways in which the South has been made the scapegoat for the nation’s ills has been undertaken differently in specific historical periods, every representation falls within one of three basic categories. As Agnew has delineated:

Projecting qualities drawn from a rendering of a specific historical experience of one place (England, the West, or the United States for Italy; northern Italy for the Italian South) onto terrestrial space in general promotes three dominant tendencies in social science. One is the tendency to essentialize, or identify one trait as characterizing a particular spatial unit (e.g. caste in India; Mafia in Sicily; political instability in Italy as a whole). A second is a temptation to exoticize, or focus on differences as a single criterion for comparison between areas. Similarities or universal conundrums (e.g. barriers to political participation, difficulties of social mobility) are thereby ignored. The third is a tendency to totalize comparisons, or turn relative differences into absolute ones. The whole of society is thereby made recognizable by any one of its parts.²³

Of these three, the tendencies to exoticize and essentialize have dominated characterizations of the South. They enframe the representational process as a complex dualism. The South recurrently has been imagined as both exotic/picturesque and antiquated, immoral, and backward. The former envisionment can be either positive or negative. Some have painted romantic views of the region as unspoiled physical spectacle and repository of a simpler way of

life attuned to the natural world, while others have imagined a bountiful land inhabited by savages and a place more African than European. In contrast, the latter stereotype is wholly negative. It positions the South as needing authoritarian guidance from the central State because of socioeconomic backwardness and/or a culture of criminality and religious superstition. Both tactics situate the South as the Other of northern Italy and Europe. And in so doing, each infuses a fear of radicalism (e.g. brigandage, peasant uprisings, communism) and difference (e.g. skin color, dialect, customs).

Internal tendencies to exoticize and essentialize the South must be understood as reactions to the region coming to represent the entire nation for outside observers since Unification. In his inquiry on the Italian national character, Alessandro Cavalli has shown how descriptions of Italians made by foreigners overwhelmingly focus on categories internally associated with southerners. These include familism, localism, clientelism, fatalism, overt sexuality, cunning, deceitfulness, and violence. Cavalli adds how these impressions of Italianness are predominantly vices rather than virtues. Just as the classically Neapolitan strategies of *arte di arrangiarsi* (art of getting by), *cavarsela* (finding a way out), and *tirarsi fuori dalle difficoltà* (getting out of trouble) are perceived by northern Italians as immoral actions instead of rational techniques, localism and familism in reference to all Italians are traits symptomatic of antimodernism and parochialism.²⁴

Cavalli's findings hint at the inbetweenness of Italian nationalism—a collective civic spirit and culture that is neither quite North nor South, European nor Mediterranean, core nor periphery. As Antonio Gramsci opined in the 1920s, the enduring feature of the Italian nation-state since its inception has been the divide between North and South, which continually requires reification. It is obvious that, ninety years later, this is still the case. Identifying the ways that this

division has been reaffirmed since Unification is therefore essential to understanding the longstanding difficulty of creating a sense of national unity.

Imagining the Mezzogiorno

Any attempt to summarize the literature on the South is a foolhardy endeavor. As the Italian scholar Piero Bevilacqua has remarked, “Since 1860, no place, ideal, person, or event has been analyzed, dissected, constructed, and distorted to the extent the Mezzogiorno has in the historiography of modern Italy.”²⁵ He relates this breadth of scholarship to the fact that the region continually has been identified as a “problem.” As such, the South has represented a “perpetual hypothesis” for researchers who have sought to identify both the causes of and solutions to the broader issue of Italian nationalism. In the last twenty years, engagement with the Southern Question has developed a more revisionist slant, with focus moving from analysis of cause and effect to the demythification of southern stereotypes. In his review of this “new southernist agenda,” John Davis has identified the unifying factor as a methodological shift away from “political history toward social history and the historical sociology of politics and power, from macro- to microeconomic analysis, from the center to the periphery, from the history of political movements and organized labor to the history of social formation and social relations.”²⁶

This postmodern approach is epitomized by the research endeavors of the Istituto Meridionale di Storia e Scienze Sociali (IMES). Founded in 1986 by Bevilacqua and Augusto Placanica, IMES fosters collaborative, interdisciplinary studies of the South and its quarterly journal, *Meridiana*, has become the “standard-bearer for new approaches to the Mezzogiorno.”²⁷ The majority of literature produced by IMES is supportive of one or more of its three principal

goals: to dispel concepts of southern uniformity (e.g. economic and social backwardness); to divorce the history of the South from its reduction to the Other of the North; and to encourage *pensiero meridiano* or “southern thinking”—internally generated solutions to regional development.

To these ends, the revisionist historiography has had a remarkable impact. Reappraisals of southern agriculture during the Liberal Period have refuted longstanding associations of economic stagnation and social injustice ascribed to the *latifondi* with case-study evidence that suggests high levels of flexibility, specialization, efficiency, and wage protection throughout the system.²⁸ Additional studies have challenged conceptions of homogeneity and immobility within the southern economy. These findings highlight historical examples of spatial differentiation and innovative adaptation to competition and global market fluctuations.²⁹ Scholars have also made great strides in undoing the ideological framework that poses the South as the antithesis of the North. Some have reversed the dialectic, seeing the history of northern Italy through the comparative lens of the South and reframing the problems of southern underdevelopment as a consequence of a “Northern Question.”³⁰ Others have attempted to wrest the South from comparisons with the North altogether by emphasizing southern familism, economic improvisation, and artistry as positive traits worthy of regional pride and unity.³¹

Although this new historiography has done much to discredit the negative stereotypes of the South, it largely ignores the historical contexts in which these images have been created and reaffirmed. This is partly the result of the methodology employed. Jonathan Morris has defined the standard approach as *microstoria*—microscale analyses that “attempt to capture a ‘holistic’ picture of human interrelationships, which, of necessity, favoured the intensive study of a single episode, enterprise, family or, above all, community.”³² This has produced a patchwork of

localistic and particularistic evidence that, while enlightening, ultimately neglects questions of how macroregional antagonisms have been reified and why they persist as the most prominent and politically relevant. Dickie has summarized this void:

The new southern historiography has done much to puncture stereotypes of the South. But it has yet to address systematically the historical task of analyzing the various ideas of the South produced at various times. To put it in philosophical terms, historians of the South have shown us the gap between stereotypical utterances about the Mezzogiorno and their referent, but they have not shown us the relationship between those utterances and their context.³³

Beyond simple identification, Dickie has contributed greatly to rectifying this absence. His book, *Darkest Italy: The Nation and Stereotypes of the Mezzogiorno, 1860-1900*, along with Nelson Moe's *The View from Vesuvius: Italian Culture and the Southern Question*, and Christopher Duggan's *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy Since 1796* stand as the best attempts to contextualize the use of southern stereotypes in the nation-building process. Together, these books constitute an exhaustive account of the sociopolitical motivations and power relations underlying the various depictions of the South since the Napoleonic Era.

With concern for my dissertation objectives, it is important to note that Dickie's and Moe's analyses end around 1900, and while Duggan does continue to the present, he does not extend his political situation of regional stereotypes into the twentieth century. Focus in all three works is squarely on the first thirty years following Unification. This acknowledgment underscores my concentration on the contextualization of regional stereotypes in the first thirty years of the Republican Period starting in 1948. My intent is to show how representational images of the South following Unification have been reiterated, reified, and contested in the postwar era. In order to explain this relationship, it is important to briefly outline some of the dominant visions of the South constructed during the principal political phases leading up to the formation of the modern republic in 1948.

Preunification

Popular impressions of the peninsula during the first half of the nineteenth century related strongly to an external perception of cultural and economic regression following the Renaissance. Italy's transition from Europe's "museum to its mausoleum" was partly a function of a radical inversion of continental supremacy from the Mediterranean to Northern Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as primary divisions were solidified between former and current imperial powers and Protestant and Catholic blocks.³⁴ Italians as a whole were measured against the glorious pasts of the Roman Empire and the Renaissance, which easily overwhelmed all cultural, political, or economic achievements of the modern territory. Delineations of regional subdivisions within the peninsula were derived primarily from distinctions in physical geography.

The majority of images during this time were constructed and disseminated by Northern European novelists and travelers. Montesquieu's book, *The Spirit of the Laws*, influenced many writers of the early nineteenth century who utilized his theory of climatic influence as scientific justification for their portrayals of Italians as dilatory, uncivilized, and violent. He posited that the effect of temperature on the body substantially influenced temperament and character. Cold climates rendered inhabitants vigorous and bold yet dispassionate, whereas hot climates produced sensual pleasure-seekers whose productivity was hindered by their heat-induced lethargy and irritability. Not surprisingly, Montesquieu's France occupied the center of the temperate zone that imbued its residents with only the positive qualities of the other two areas. The Alps provided a natural southern border for his division of the continent. Relegation of the Italian peninsula to the hot zone provided a convenient explanation for that territory's lack of a unified government, economic dynamism, and social progressivism. Moe has shown that such

emphasis on environmental determinism in representations of Italy was tied to a northern obsession with mapping the boundaries of Europe during this period.³⁵ Claims of international superiority based on the cultural, political, and economic commonalities of the northwestern nations necessitated the exclusion of Italy from any definition of Europeanness.

Following Montesquieu's guide, writers and politicians such as Charles-Victor de Bonstetten, the Marquis de Sade, William Gladstone, and Ernest Renan attempted to identify Europe's cultural boundaries. In relation to Italy, the southern continental border moved farther and farther south as more travelers published their experiences of the peninsula. The dividing line was at first the Alps, then the Garigliano River (the border between Lazio and Campania), and then Naples itself. A particularly influential account was that of Augustin Creuzé de Lesser, a French traveler and Napoleonic administrator. In his book, *Voyage en Italie et en Sicilie*, he proffered the notion of a distinct North-South divide, claiming that "Europe ends at Naples and ends there quite badly. Calabria, Sicily, all the rest is part of Africa." Echoing the ideas of Montesquieu, Creuzé de Lesser based his categorization of the southern populace as "permeated by slothfulness, immorality, and savagery" on the harshness of the southern sun that "renders the land desolate and inhospitable and the men idle."³⁶

In some instances, images of the Mezzogiorno morphed into exotic and alluring metaphors of the South as a preserve of the picturesque—a land that lent itself to northern European travelers who wished to experience "Africa without leaving the continent" or the juxtaposition of past and present where "an uncivilized state [exists] side by side with civilization."³⁷ Although generally denunciatory towards the South (especially Naples), de Sade identified a redemptive function in the region's primitiveness when he asked: "Is it not a blessing for Europe that there are belated provinces like these whose backwardness enables us to measure

the progress of the others?”³⁸ In this way, the South also represented Rousseau’s mythical state of nature—a place “untouched by and opposed to Europe’s stale and artificial civilization” in which the sultry climate, subtropical flora, and unspoiled coastlines rendered it a “paradise inhabited by devils.”³⁹

Unification

In the fall of 1860, just months prior to the formation of the Kingdom of Italy, the northern general Luigi Carlo Farini reported to Count Cavour about the conditions he encountered in the South. His bleak assessment read: “What lands are these. . . ! What barbarism! This is not Italy! This is Africa. Compared to these peasants the Bedouins are the pinnacle of civilization.”⁴⁰ The appalling situation of the region was initially blamed on the former Bourbon rulers. Piedmontese administrators believed that, with this tumor excised, the Mezzogiorno would regenerate into a “gentle and happy state promised by the natural environment.” However, as southerners rebelled against northern intrusion, the prognosis for the region changed and the dominant image reverted to framing the South as “a happy land rendered unhappy by men.”⁴¹

In their “irrational and violent resistance” to the benevolent attempts by Piedmont officials to instill “proper institutions and civility,” southerners were cast as “a cancer that if left uncontrolled, [would] spread and infect the rest of Italy.”⁴² Action was therefore necessary, even military force. But to justify such measures, it was essential to disseminate even more extreme images of southern barbarism and immorality. During the first two decades of Unification, “no phenomenon evoked the South more powerfully in the imaginary of the middle and upper classes than brigandage.”⁴³

Photographs and artist renderings of brigands torching buildings and fields, rotting in prison, and hanging from scaffoldings circulated widely in northern periodicals and firmly settled public opinion on the matter. The Pica law of 1863 legalized both the suspension of civil liberties in the region and the use of military force to curtail further rebellion. It cast a wide net by criminalizing not only overt acts such as food and tax riots, land occupation, castle rustling, and destruction of property, but also the more elastic offense of *manutengolismo*—aiding and abetting brigands. Using this power, authorities waged a campaign of intimidation via widespread arrests for relatively minor offenses.⁴⁴

The image of the South as a lawless frontier legitimated a program of forced assimilation, and thus of continued outsider occupation and rule. Gone were idealist visions of integration and complementation. According to this authoritarian spatial logic, “the South [existed] outside the law as its spectator, the brigands outside as its object,” which placed the task of “making the southern peoples understand the National Idea” in the hands of the army.⁴⁵

Noteworthy is the way that the image of brigandage was symbolically inverted by southerners themselves. Banditry in particular was ascribed an air of patriotism by which any attempts to subvert foreign domination, regardless of the atrociousness of methods, were heralded as noble. Tales of bandit-heroes fighting against the advancements of a monolithic and inhumane imperialist State developed in southern folklore. Existing in the tenuous space between individuality and community, morality and immorality, the image of the bandit, in its “combination of romanticism and brutality, of exoticism and squalor,” encapsulated the Mezzogiorno’s own “ambivalent position between the Italian national space and the badlands beyond.”⁴⁶

The Ascendancy of the Left and Meridionalismo

The imagery of southerners as primitive savages remained a dominant stereotype throughout the Liberal Period. Under the influence of criminal anthropologists such as Cesare Lombroso, Alfredo Niceforo, Enrico Ferri, Raffaele Garofalo, Giuseppe Sergi, and Paolo Orano, a literature of racist positivism developed as a means to scientifically explain southern deviance and backwardness. This rhetoric presenting physiognomic and sociobiological characteristics as indisputable evidence of the differences between “Aryans” of the North and “Mediterraneans” of the South again served to justify military excursions in the South. It framed the region as an experimental proving ground for subsequent imperialist endeavors in Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Libya.⁴⁷

The coming to power of the Left in 1876 marked the entry of the southern ruling classes into national political life and thus a change in regional portrayals. A group of southern intellectuals referred to as *meridionalisti* (southernists) set the new tone, notably Pasquale Villari, Giustino Fortunato, Leopoldo Franchetti and Sidney Sonnino. These men conducted their own field-based studies of the Mezzogiorno that illuminated government failures to understand and address the spatially unique socioeconomic problems of the region and identified characteristics of southern society itself that deterred the pursuit of modern objectives.⁴⁸ As ardent supporters of a unified state, the *meridionalisti* intended, via empirical analysis, to “combat ignorance about the South and offer a true image in its place”—an image that, devoid of ideological underpinnings and myth, would isolate the sectors of southern society most in need of State intervention.⁴⁹

Although *meridionalisti* contributions to a more objective and empathetic understanding of the conditions of the South during this period cannot be denied, they witnessed firsthand the

cooptation of their findings to support the continuation of southern subordination and exclusion. Reports of the widespread influence of the Sicilian *mafia* and Neapolitan *camorra*, intended to highlight the need for State encouragement of more dynamic forms of agriculture and the creation of a class of peasant landowners, were repositioned by the political right as evidence of an inherent southern criminality. Assessments of the southern economy as undifferentiated and too heavily agrarian, meant to encourage greater industrial subsidies and incentives, were instead accepted as confirmation of the region's lack of entrepreneurial spirit. Similarly, the South's extraordinary unemployment level was framed as a consequence of overpopulation rather than a function of feudal land ownership divisions left over from Bourbon rule.

The ways in which the works of the early southernists were transfigured into nation-building dialogue highlights a primary weakness of their approach. Attempts to scientifically define the specificity of the South and its differentiation from the North reinforced the idea that this region lay outside the Italian nation. Constructions of the Mezzogiorno produced by the *meridionalisti* were therefore stereotypical in that "they were integral to the way a set of values and a cultural identity were articulated: they emerged within specific discourses of moralism, patriotism, liberalism, and positivist social analysis."⁵⁰ Villari's claim that the South was both the nation's "greatest moral danger and its ultimate salvation" symbolized the emerging perception of the Mezzogiorno in the last decades of the nineteenth century as the testing ground of Italy's modernity, the measure of its claims to civility, and the focus of its national solidarity.⁵¹

Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Hemorrhaging of the South

The years between 1900 and 1918 produced a multitude of political, economic, and social changes for Italy that, in many instances, laid the foundation for the nation's extraordinary

development in the middle decades of the twentieth century. For the South, however, this period was defined almost exclusively by massive emigration. Although the number of Italians who moved abroad between 1861 and 1900 was a substantial seven million, two-thirds of these were from the North and over half migrated to other European countries. This was seen as a sign of progress in some ways, part of the priority of the first Italian government to connect the North to the rest of Europe (both physically and ideologically). The modernization of transportation routes through the Alps, such as railways over the Brenner Pass (completed in 1867) and Fréjus Tunnel (completed in 1871), facilitated the movement of these migrants. From 1900 to the end of World War I, however, emigration flows shifted dramatically. Of the eleven million people who left the peninsula during this time, an estimated eighty percent came from the South and their primary destinations were North and South America. This staggering total amounted to a loss of over thirty-five percent of the total population of the Mezzogiorno in less than twenty years.⁵²

The “hemorrhaging of the South” had numerous causes and consequences. What is important to stress here is the way that southern emigration was framed politically as a solution to the “southern problem” and how this view was subsequently incorporated as a core component of a nationalist campaign centered on colonial expansion. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, the primary tactic for instilling a sense of national pride amongst the southern masses was their inclusion in civil service positions and the armed forces. The financial and political costs of this strategy were exponentially less than those required by the sweeping structural changes suggested by the *meridionalisti*. Many southernists did support the expansion of the central state. However, their visions of industrial subsidies, land reform, and infrastructural improvements that would foster growth of a southern middle class were eschewed by both the political left and right

who preferred that government intervention in the South be limited to the bureaucratic sphere, in which clientelism functioned as the rule of law.

Federal positions of localized power were awarded to those who vowed to provide voter support for the ruling national parties. The creation of thousands of State jobs in the South by leaders of the left (Francesco Crispi) and right (Giovanni Giolitti) was meant to symbolize the government's incorporation of southerners into the national realm. In actuality, this process reinforced the power of southern landowners (who were appointed to the majority of posts) and the Liberal Party while doing little to alleviate chronic unemployment and poverty among the southern working classes. Duggan has suggested that the subsequent associations of southern bureaucracy with corruption, favoritism, and inefficiency after the turn of the century were exactly what the Liberal Party leaders had hoped for.⁵³ If the efforts of the State to include the South in the nation-building process were perceived to fail because of southern crookedness and *campanilismo*, then other forms of government intervention could be preemptively scuttled, based on the rationale that southerners would corrupt any and all programs of assistance.⁵⁴

As economic conditions worsened, emigration rapidly increased. To better control the mass exodus from the South, the State formed the Commissariat of Emigration in 1901. Politically, the agency was portrayed as benevolently concerned for the well-being of departing citizens. It fixed ticket costs for overseas voyages, provided health care and inspections for emigres, and brokered agreements with receiving countries to help care for the people upon arrival. Its underlying intent, however, was to facilitate and expedite the process. In 1903, the Commissariat established Palermo and Naples as the primary ports of embarkation for the entire country. Through a program administered by the federal Banco Italiano di Sconto, the agency also encouraged emigrants to exchange remittance dollars sent from the Americas for treasury

bonds with guaranteed, short-term interest rates. The volume of remittances in the first decade of the twentieth century alone has been estimated to exceed five percent of the Italian gross domestic product during that time.⁵⁵ With the majority of this money deposited in the State-run bank, it became clear to many critics that the program was turning “emigrants and their families . . . into agents that would give the State the financial means by which to subsidize the parasitic industries of the North,” while allowing the government to rely on remittances in general as the exclusive economic catalyst for the South.⁵⁶

Although nationalist mythology would occasionally frame southern emigration as “the ebbing away of the nation’s life blood” and “a preventable harm to the advancement of the country,” the dispersal of millions of Italians abroad was a key component in a campaign to generate national unity through colonial conquest.⁵⁷ The establishment of emigrant communities throughout North and South America, Australia, and Europe was recast as a desirable aspect of cultural colonialism rather than the consequence of domestic push factors. This complemented the less benign tactics of expansion that centered on the use of military force and rule of foreign lands.

Crispi’s assertion that “there is no better way to invigorate the masses with a sense of nationalism than war” underscored his attempt to instill pride in the nation by colonizing Ethiopia in 1896.⁵⁸ Even though the Italian army failed in this quest, suffering a humiliating defeat at the Battle of Adwa that resulted in his resignation, Crispi’s political successors maintained the belief that territorial enlargement would rally Italians around a united cause. In 1911, nationalist advocacy for Italian control of the Mediterranean led Giolitti to declare war on the Ottoman Empire and to invade the provinces of Tripolitania, Fezzan, and Cyrenaica

(modern-day Libya). Following the successful annexation of Libya, Giolitti used the promise of free land to entice over forty thousand southerners to move to that territory in 1912 alone.

Italian entry in World War I represented the ultimate chance to manufacture allegiance to the nation. The importance of the opportunity was summed up by the nationalist and future Fascist politician Luigi Federzoni: “Italy has awaited this since 1866, her truly national war, in order to feel united at last, renewed by the unanimous action and identical sacrifice of all her sons.”⁵⁹ The sad reality for southerners during this period was that their most admirable contributions to the growth of the nation involved absence, in both their physical departure from the peninsula and their deaths on the battlefield.

Antonio Gramsci and the Defense of the South

Despite being on the victorious side, the end of World War I ushered in a period of political turmoil. Under the Treaty of London (1915) and, in exchange for its support of the Triple Entente, Italy had been promised numerous territories along its northern border, across the Adriatic, and in Africa. Allied forces reneged on these agreements at the Paris Peace Conference (1919) however, and granted Italy only the Dalmatian port of Zara, the island of Lagosta, and portions of Trentino. Although furious over the betrayal, Prime Minister Vittorio Orlando eventually signed the Treaty of Versailles. This capitulation led to a wave of public outcry from leaders of the far left and right who were quick to criticize the failures of his Liberal Party.

Prowar nationalists such as Benito Mussolini and Gabriele D’Annunzio led the attack on the prime minister and portrayed his acquiescence as a belittlement of the financial and corporeal sacrifices made by the Italian populace. Orlando’s unwillingness to stand firm against the dictates of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Russia was perceived as

humiliating and defeatist, in that this act thwarted Italy's imperial intentions and desired recognition as an equal international superpower. To rectify this, the nationalists called for the end of Liberal rule and a strengthening of the central State through reactionary isolationism. Ultimately, their platform would be affirmed by the rise to power of the Fascist Party in 1924 and its stranglehold on Italian politics for nearly twenty years.

Galvanized by the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, the left offered its own condemnation of the war effort and proposed a different path forward. Leaders of the Radical (PR) and Socialist (PSI) parties, including Francesco Saverio Nitti, Gaetano Salvemini, and Guido Dorso, admonished Italy's involvement in the war as a tactic of northern bourgeois enrichment. They emphasized that over two-thirds of the seven hundred thousand soldiers killed were southerners. Salvemini and Dorso believed that the best way for the South to escape its position of northern servitude was by asserting independence from central government. In Dorso's words:

The people of the South need to win self-government, and develop practical solutions which openly reject the requirements of paternalism. . . . it is precisely these common services and sacrifices [of the war] that have given the people of the South the right to demand the destruction of the old economic and political order, which the northern Oligarchies have used to create a veritable dictatorship at the South's expense, bleeding it dry economically and failing to educate it politically.⁶⁰

In contrast to the autonomist argument, Antonio Gramsci outlined a third course of action, one that would lead to Italian unity via a working-class political hegemony based on an alliance between southern peasants and northern industrial workers. Together with Amadeo Bordiga, he split from the Socialist Party to form the Communist Party (PCI) in 1921. Through both the weekly *L'Ordine Nuovo* (which he founded) and the PCI's official newspaper, *L'Unita*, Gramsci championed an image of the South as the lynchpin of a truly populist revolution. In the essay, "Workers and Peasants," he wrote:

The Northern bourgeoisie has subjugated the South of Italy and the islands, and reduced them to exploitable colonies; by emancipating itself from capitalist slavery, the Northern proletariat will emancipate the Southern peasant masses enslaved to the banks and the parasitic industrialism of the North. The economic and political regeneration of the peasants should not be sought in the division of uncultivated or poorly cultivated lands, but in the solidarity of the industrial proletariat who need, in turn, the solidarity of the peasantry.⁶¹

Gramsci's call for an interregional coalition of the proletarian masses harkened back to Mazzini's bottom-up plan for Italian unification, in both a class-based and geographical sense. Gramsci clearly believed that State-instituted agrarian reform, industrial development (as recommended by Nitti), and regional independence (as heralded by Dorso) would only exacerbate the subordinate position of the South. For the majority of the populace to be included in the national process, it was first necessary to break down bipolar representations of the North and South and create a more complex view of social stratification and intraregional differentiation.

In *Notes on the Southern Problem and the Attitudes Toward it of Communists, Socialists and Democrats*, Gramsci summarized the South as “*una grande disgregazione sociale*” (“a great social disintegration”) in which:

Southern society is a large agrarian bloc made up of three social strata: the large peasant mass, amorphous and disintegrated; the intellectuals of the petty and medium rural bourgeoisie; and the large landowners and the great intellectuals. Southern peasants are in perpetual ferment, but as a mass they are unable to give a centralized expression to their aspirations and needs. The middle strata of intellectuals receives the impulses for its political and ideological activity from the peasant base. In the last stage of analysis, the large landlords in the political field and the great intellectuals in the ideological field centralize and dominate the whole complex of manifestations.⁶²

On the surface, this description could be taken as reinforcement of the backward stereotype he fought so strongly against. His intent, however, was to identify ways that southern intellectuals

and land owners betrayed the interests of the peasant masses in order to highlight the need for the development of a new class of “organic” intellectuals.

Gramsci emphasized how traditional southern intellectuals came mainly from the rural bourgeoisie, a class of petty and medium landowners “who [do] not work the land, who would be ashamed to be farmers.” As a result, these people harbor “a fierce antipathy for the working peasants, whom they consider a machine for work that must be bled dry to the bone and that can be easily substituted.”⁶³ Consumed by the relative power of their positions in State bureaucracy (largely granted to them by local landowners), this group of southern intellectuals, although “democratic in its peasant face,” in reality served to “prevent the cracks in the agrarian bloc from becoming too dangerous” by distorting and fragmenting the revolutionary agenda of the peasants’ movements.⁶⁴

The “centralized expression” of the masses needed to be vocalized by the peasantry’s own organic intellectuals. Gramsci envisioned the members of this class as both organizers and ideologues who could merge theory and praxis and be capable of operating within the dominant modes of the State apparatus while always preserving their working-class allegiance. Cultivating this class of intellectuals was particularly promising in the South. Framed so often as a disintegrative trait, *campanilismo* could be reimagined to extend from place- to class-based loyalty. To make southern workers aware of their collective plight and aspirations, Gramsci emphasized the development of a secular education network separate from the Catholic Church and the State. The unwillingness of the ruling parties during the Liberal Period to develop State educational institutions in the South, while debilitating in one sense, had a positive effect in Gramsci’s view. It left the southern peasantry uncorrupted by bourgeois indoctrination. As a result, the majority of southerners maintained a “purity of thought, feeling, principle and intent,

devoid of capitalist ideology (if not its affect)” that, once consolidated and articulated, would make known that “only two social forces are essentially national and bearers of the future: the proletariat and the peasants.”⁶⁵ For unity to be truly achieved, the fifty-year “passive” revolution conducted by the aristocratic classes had to be replaced by an active revolution initiated from the ground up. Collaboration between the marginalized working classes of the North and South was paramount to this process. Gramsci envisioned this as a series of “little molecular transformations” that hinged upon the ability of the new southern intellectuals to convince the proletarian and peasant masses of the possibility of achieving national unity through consent instead of force.

Fascism

To the dismay of Gramsci and the political left, the Fascist tactic of constructing nationalism through force prevailed in the interwar years. Ironically, this strategy to transform Italy into a late colonial and corporatist power involved an ideological and practical deconstruction of regional dualism. As Mariella Pandolfi has claimed, in the period following Unification, only under Fascism “did the many complex elements that composed the Italian nation come together to affirm that identity, overriding and obliterating the rhetorical strategy of an Italy divided between North and South.”⁶⁶ The image of Italy as a utopian project coalesced by the collective dream of achieving superpower status grew to cover the entire national territory. North and South as enemies did not figure in the everyday discourse of Fascist intellectuals. As a result, the Southern Question was supplanted by a consuming vision that posited the nation as a whole as the direct descendant of Imperial Rome.

Although Fascist rhetoric projected an air of equitable concern for all Italians, the regime's autarkic economic policies and its actions undertaken to maintain absolute power reinforced the subordination of southern development to the industrial and agricultural modernization of the North. Economically, Fascist policy embodied a "strengthening of the strong," in which the government placed emphasis squarely on large-scale intensive agriculture in the Po Valley as a means to finance industry. Then, to protect emerging capital-intensive (rather than traditional labor-intensive) heavy industries in the North, Mussolini championed the ruralization of the South as a patriotic necessity. "Return to the land" was promoted as a means to avoid the evils of supercapitalism (sterility of industrial society, amoralism) and to preserve traditional ways of life. In actuality it served two other important functions. One was to reduce urban underemployment. From the viewpoint of both national self-sufficiency and public order, rural under/unemployment in the South was far preferable to its urban counterpart. The other function was to hinder the alliance between northern industrial workers and southern peasants by heavily regulating internal migration. This complemented severe limitations now placed on emigration abroad designed to end the "silent revolution" of the South, i.e. the monetary wealth generated from remittances that allowed entire communities (particularly in Sicily) to circumvent domestic markets and taxation.

Politically, Mussolini set about "northernizing" State bureaucracy. Given Fascism's origins and support base in the North, this was not unexpected. The secondary motive in this, however, was to "desouthernize" the civil sector. Under the Crispi and Giolitti governments, southerners had come to occupy over three-fifths of federal positions. Following the war, weakness of the State was consistently blamed on this "infestation," in which the endemic southern traits of "corruption, clientelism, and radicalism had been allowed to spread from the

localized frontierlands of Sicily, Naples, and Basilicata to the very center of State institutions.”⁶⁷ Purging southerners from the federal work force was framed as a necessary consequence of the Fascist campaign to eradicate organized crime. The underlying motivation was nonetheless made clear by Mussolini, who stated: “If we cannot trust southerners to govern themselves by rational and resolute means, we certainly cannot leave the decisions of the State and the future of Italy in the hands of the uncivilized and uneducated.”⁶⁸

Despite its populist and ruralist message in the South, Fascism tended to reiterate stereotypes of the region as agrarian, barbaric, and socially antiquated. As much as cultivation of the land by the southern peasantry was heralded as the patriotic recognition of the needs of the State over those of the individual and the most salient way that they could contribute to the growth of the nation, its real intent was to entrench the South as a vehicle for northern modernization. The massive promotion of wheat, for example, had more to do with producing a commodity that could be traded for the raw materials needed to fuel northern industry than with nationalist claims of food self-sufficiency. The South was once again rendered an exploitable resource for the advancement of the “real” Italy, its participation in the nation-building process reduced to an acceptance of the jingoistic symbols of Fascism.

Conclusion

Prior to the formation of the first Italian Republic in 1948, the diverse engagements with the Southern Question had one common characteristic. They all situated the South in a dependency relationship with the North. Whether the message was the Mezzogiorno as the exotic and primitive measuring stick for modern Europe, the calls for State interventionist policies needed to implant an entrepreneurial ethic and capitalist efficiency, the Left’s insistence that

salvation lay in the liberation of the southern peasantry by the northern proletariat, or the Fascist rhetoric that spoke of the modernization of the North and the ruralization of the South, the region was consistently rendered incapable of generating its own renewal, devoid of any qualities that could be incorporated into a vision and definition of the Italian nation other than labor and agricultural production.

Writing from prison, Gramsci lucidly summarized the “complex feelings created in the North about the South” since the earliest stages of the Risorgimento:

The “poverty” of the South was “historically” inexplicable to the Northern popular masses: they did not understand that unity had not been created on a basis of equality, but as a hegemony of the North over the South in a city-country territorial relation; in other words, that the North was a “parasite” which enriched itself at the expense of the South, that industrial development was dependent on the impoverishment of Southern agriculture. Instead they thought that if the South made no progress after being freed from the obstacles that Bourbon rule had placed in the way of modern development, this meant that the causes of the poverty were not external but internal; moreover, given the deep-seated belief in the great natural wealth of the land, there remained but one explanation: the organic incapacity of the people, their barbarity, their biological inferiority. These already widespread opinions (Neapolitan *lazzaroni* had long been legendary) were firmly established and even theorized by positivist sociologists. . . . thus acquiring the validity of “scientific truths” at a time of scientific superstition. Hence there was a North-South polemic about race and about the superiority and inferiority of North and South. . . . Meanwhile, the North persisted in the belief that the South represented Italy’s “dead weight,” the conviction that the modern industrial civilization of the North would have made greater progress without this “dead weight,” etc., etc.⁶⁹

Gramsci hoped that his identification of the dominant stereotypes and the principle modes utilized to transmit and reinforce these beliefs would focus the production of counterhegemonic responses on the most effective and popular communicative outlets. Until World War I, images and impressions of the South were disseminated primarily through newspapers, political

journals, public speeches, novels, and illustrated magazines. After the war, radio began to play a role as well, but it was film that would develop as the most popular and profusive medium.

The role that cinema could play in the culture wars of the twentieth century was understood almost universally. Trotsky saw film as “the most important weapon, which cries out to be used, [and] is the best instrument for . . . a propaganda which is accessible to everyone, cuts into the memory and may be made a possible source of revenue” for the political left.⁷⁰ At the 1937 inauguration of Italy’s first State-run film studio, Cinecittà, Mussolini unveiled a portrait of himself behind a camera lens with the reworked phrase emblazoned across the top: “film is the most powerful weapon.” Although the Fascist commitment to creating unity through faith in its own martyrs, rituals, festivals, and symbols “ultimately marked the bankruptcy of the conscious attempts at building national identity by indoctrination and State action,” its emphasis on film for message propagation had a remarkable impact on the development of the cinema industry.

In the first thirty years of the Republican Period, film would contribute greatly to reimagining and repositioning the South in the national process. Reiterations of the region as a site of displacement, an underdeveloped and archaic land, and a violent and lawless frontier, would be challenged by contestatory portrayals of the South as a site of regeneration, an untainted periphery to a sterile modernity, and an incubator of proletarian revolution and radicalism. The influential effect of film on public opinion was realized in the unprecedented popularity, financial success, and longevity of the postwar genres that together comprised the most identifiable and referenced example of twentieth-century national cinema.

Chapter 2

Film Neorealism and the Postwar Italian Condition

In his examination of the relationship between cinema and sociocultural transformation in Italy, P. Adams Sitney identifies two specific periods in which film has participated most actively in the (re)construction and communication of the changing nation: the immediate postwar period of the late 1940s, and the early 1960s, years marked by the apex of Italy's "economic miracle."¹ These times of political, social, and economic reorganization correspond with the two cinematic genres that have become most emblematic of Italian national cinema: neorealism, and the "auteur" or "art" films of the late 1950s and 1960s. Although considerable critical analysis exists on the politicized films of Sitney's "vital crisis" and their relationship to transformative cultural issues, the impact of neorealism is still largely encased within a formal or aesthetic analytical shell.² The innovativeness of neorealist films almost exclusively has been tied to their newness in cinematic style and narrative form, viewed as symbolic of the great break or divide between classical and modernist, action-image and time-image cinema.³

Emphasis on the *techniques* of neorealist filmmaking, specifically the stylistic commonalities found in the propensity for location shooting, natural lighting, the use of non-actors, and voyeuristic long shots, has largely obfuscated equally important and socially driven content and commentary. Similarly, the identification of neorealism as a decisive counter to the cinema under Fascism is too simplistic in its reduction of neorealism to a reactionary movement. It occludes, for example, the fact that many neorealist directors, including Luchino Visconti, Roberto Rossellini, Vittorio De Sica, Giuseppe De Santis, Luigi Zampa, and Cesare Zavattini, began their careers during the Fascist era.

Contrary to common considerations about neorealism as a stylistically bounded movement, director and film theorist Carlo Lizzani has insisted that the most acute unifying factor in these films is their “hybridization of culture.”⁴ To Lizzani, this includes tendencies both to represent multiple social classes across diverse regions (specifically a novel emphasis on the working class and the South) and to illuminate the exchange of traditional social roles brought on by the war. Equally important is Lizzani’s suggestion that neorealism itself is best characterized by a hybridization of genre. Counter to prevailing assessments, no singular narrative form unites the films. Neorealist works instead tend to be composites. They are amalgams of tried-and-true genre formulas central to prewar Italian cinema, ranging from melodrama, comedy, and historical epic to documentary and suspense. More than technique or narrative, an obsessive emphasis with re-imagining the nation through the portrayal of social reality serves as the primary unifying element. Tied by what Millicent Marcus refers to as “*una nuova poesia morale*,” neorealist films, via their dramatization of endemic and problematic cultural, regional, and class differences between North and South, city and country, presented a powerful populist counterargument to the coercive and homogenizing vision of nationalism under Fascism. Through the injection of local and regional social realities into cinema, neorealism exposed the fallacies of Italian unity ascribed to the Risorgimento while simultaneously offering a radically new concept of nationalism based on class consciousness, cultural heterogeneity, and regional complementation in a postwar environment characterized by the widespread reconstruction of the nation’s politics, economy, and culture.

In this chapter I present a counterargument to the view of neorealist film developing “out of nowhere,” springing organically from the cultural void and political and economic uncertainty of the immediate postwar period. My intention is to identify neorealism, in a very Gramscian

sense, as representative of a “molecular transformation” of the existing Italian state, standing in contrast to Fascism’s projection of a wholesale new form for the nation. Incorporated in such a reading is a necessity to position the divergent political strategies of constructing nationalism based upon either force or consent.⁵ First, I locate Fascist filmmaking influences on neorealist directors as a means of highlighting the transformative (as opposed to revolutionary) nature of the artistic movement. Second, I examine the primary methods ascribed to Fascist interpretations and representations of the nation and nationalism. I then compare these to neorealist endeavors in order to outline the central filmic modes of resistance used to counter Fascist models. Third, I illustrate via a dissection of the primary visual tropes of Fascist cinema how neorealist directors sought to co-opt and transform the predominant semiotic codes of the regime through a contradistinctive sociopolitical lens. Last, I relate the points above in specific detail to Luchino Visconti’s film *La terra trema: Episodio del mare* (The Earth Trembles: Episode of the Sea, 1948), which, I argue, exists as the most acute and politically driven neorealist example of re-envisioning nationalism.

In the case of Italy, in which the correlation of place and national cinema is perhaps more concretely defined than any other, the impact of film in social identification and pedagogy *must* be included in any attempt to describe the pervasive postwar tensions surrounding the ideological construction of the new republic. The power of cinema in this regard relates to several characteristics of Italian society in the immediate postwar years: the lack of a national-popular literature; low literacy rates (especially in the South); weak circulation of nation-scale periodicals; the absence of television; high levels of film production, importation, and cinema attendance; and high rates of theatre creation, particularly in the South.⁶ Together, these facts

suggest the *necessity* to utilize film and film analysis in any serious inquiry into the contextualization and nature of representations vital to this period of Italian history.

The Resurgence of Realism: Fascist Era Influences on Neorealism

It is impossible to divorce neorealism from the cinema under Fascism. Its response to Fascist ideology and iconography, specifically to representations of the nation, led to an awakening of artistic and social imaginations. A common assumption is that the “neo” element attached to realism describes the discernable break whereby postwar artists attempted “to create an imagined community to replace the (equally media-constructed) imagined community of the Fascist period.”⁷ In reality, the term refers more to the general movement within the Italian arts beginning in the 1930s (primarily with literature) that drew widespread inspiration from the *verismo* tradition in Italian fiction, painting, theatre, opera, and even cinema of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. *Verismo* itself is derived from and indebted to the writings of Giovanni Verga, one of the most heralded modern Italian writers, whose works on the Mezzogiorno focused on unmelodramatic portrayals of southern Italian social organization and customs, regional identity, and naturalism.

The renewed interest in Verga’s *verismo* in the 1930s reflected a desired aesthetic shift away from the diffuse influence, particularly in film, of the writer Gabriele D’Annunzio. In general, D’Annunzio’s writings were marked by themes of “racism, nationalism, colonialism . . . antidemocracy, and imperialism” and, as Jared Becker has commented, it is he “above all others who orchestrates the shift from a nineteenth-century culture of nation-building to a culture of radical nationalism and imperialist aggression.”⁸ *Dannunzianesimo* is equated most strongly with

illusionism, melodrama, and the nationalist rhetoric housed within the plethora of historical epics central to Fascist filmmaking in the 1920s and 1930s.

Although *dannunzianesimo* may have been the largest inspirational pool for Fascist cinema of the 1930s, the resurgence of realism via the *verismo* tradition also affected directors and films supportive of the State. Two particular directors have come to be synonymous with such realism: Mario Camerini and Alessandro Blasetti.⁹ Both men were extremely influential to neorealists of the subsequent decade through their novel address of contemporary urban and rural life and their often ambiguous treatment of the historical events from which Fascism derived its representational connections to Italian unity and greatness. Predominantly comedic in form, Camerini's films often centered on working-class protagonists of northern cities and their estranged relationship to the new urban social and physical landscape brought on by Fascist modernization policies. Consequently, his films are frequently associated (through their assessment and dissection) with the ideology of *stracittà* (urbanism or supercity), a movement popularized in literature of the early 1920s that heralded Fascist tenets of cosmopolitanism, urban renewal, and industrial development.¹⁰ The impact of Camerini on neorealism is emphasized by Lizzani's view of the director as "the great confessor of the Italian lower middle classes" at a time when the upper- and middle-class bourgeoisie (owing largely to their support of and importance to Fascist nationalism) were the most widely represented social class, typified by their preponderance as subjects in the *telefono bianco* genre.¹¹

In contrast, Blasetti's films are identified with the rural and localist convictions of *strapaese* (ruralism or supercountry), a literary movement originally formulated as a counter to *stracittà* that nonetheless was co-opted by the state as a means of representing (and conveying) the vital nature of agrarian workers to the desired achievement of domestic self-sufficiency.

Compared to Camerini, the impact of Blasetti on neorealism has little to do with sociopolitical critique. Rather, it is his “convincing sense of realism” and his ability to blend historical drama and documentary in ways that remain sensitive to diverse connections to the past based on class and region that neorealism borrows from so heavily.¹²

Although films bearing the imprint of *stracittà* and *strapaese* presented idealized and ultimately unrealistic versions of the complexities of the Italian working classes, their existence expanded the formal cinematic boundaries for addressing contemporary social issues. Through their incorporation of technical modes of filmmaking that would come to be defining conventions of neorealism, the films of Camerini and Blasetti set the stage for a cinema reactive to the state’s representations of the nation, a cinema that “unleashed the powers of the false, where conventional notions of truth, virtue, heroism, good and evil, and, above all, the real and the artificial are put into crisis, and where the possibility of a more complex relation to the world is possible.”¹³

Framing the Nation: Fascism, History, and Metaphor

Although the works of Camerini and Blasetti were highly influential, they were far outweighed in sheer numbers by a specific genre that more readily defined the ideological imaginations of Italian unity under Fascism. The historical epic served as this primary cinematic platform. Aside from the overtly propagandist “black” films, newsreels, and “documentaries” central to the mass communication of Fascist socialization policies, the historical epic developed as the principal cinematic genre in which notions of state virility and hegemony were codified through the equation of Fascism with historic episodes defined by Italian dominance,

international influence, and national unity. As Marcia Landy has stated, “the cinema under Fascism ransacked earlier historical moments--the Roman Empire, the Renaissance, the Risorgimento, and World War I--to create a pastiche of elements drawn from popular folklore, literature, opera, and current events.”¹⁴ Analogies drawn between Italy’s “glorious past” and the Fascist State underlined the ideological need to portray the latter as a truly nationalizing movement, as the realization of modern Italian unity begun, but never completed, during the Risorgimento (e.g. *1860* 1934; *Il dottor Antonio* 1937; *Piccolo mondo antico* 1941). Treatments of the more distant past often sought to justify Fascist colonialist and imperialist endeavors by their conflation with the military triumphs of the Roman Empire (e.g. *Aurora sul mare* 1934; *Lo squadrone bianco* 1936; *Scipione l’africano* 1937; *Luciano Serra pilota* 1938) and the cultural hegemony and innovation ascribed to the Renaissance (e.g. *Lorenzino de’ Medici* 1935; *Condottieri* 1937).¹⁵

A substantial body of work exists on the utilization of historical allegory to construct and convey nationalism in Fascist cinema.¹⁶ Little of this scholarship focuses on the relationships between this allegory and the reactive emphasis of neorealist works. Two elements are of particular interest in this regard as a result of their subsequent renouncement and/or alteration by neorealism: the penchant for spectacle and the iconographic representations of physical and cultural landscapes that constitute the nation. Illumination of the ways in which Fascist films constructed signs and symbols of the nation and framed the narrative space in which such representations were housed is essential to understand the avenues of resistance inherent in neorealist films. As Landy has stated:

Since neorealism eschewed the monumental and epic dimensions of the historical film that often functioned in the interests of nationalist rhetoric, and since it seemed to offer new versions of the nation, it presented new forms of address and

interrogation to filmmakers involved in postwar reconstruction, decolonization, and reconsiderations of the subaltern . . . [It] was a movement that aimed to make connections with the Risorgimento, the unification of Italy as a nation, and the unfinished revolution. It was a cinema of anti-Fascism, expressing the aspirations of the Left, focusing on social injustice and the arrogance of power, critical of the clichés and formulas of genre and with the spectacle and rhetoric of the cinema under Fascism.¹⁷

Counter to the embodiment of the nation under Fascism, the Italian experience of the immediate postwar years was that of history remaining to be written, of meanings remaining to be fixed. For Italians, this period was one of “social antagonisms that existed at the level of the *Real* of history.”¹⁸

Realism and Resistance

In summarizing the thoughts of Tim Cresswell, Peter Jackson, and Don Mitchell on the tactics of cultural subversion, Pamela Shurmer-Smith has stated that “often the politics of resistance takes the form of spectacle, shock, or irreverent play as an effective means of subverting power.”¹⁹ Each of the above geographers has, in his or her own way, illustrated how spectacle and the carnivalesque have regularly been utilized by marginalized groups to debase hegemonic constructions of culture, politics, and even public space. Although geographers have deftly illustrated, using examples ranging from the Middle Ages to Punk music, how spectacle, carnival, and *détournement* have served as means for subverting dominance, what avenues for contestation exist when spectacle itself is the primary mechanism of cultural hegemony? In such an instance, Mitchell, citing Guy Debord and Michel de Certeau, suggests that the most effective tactic “is quite literally to remake the situation, transform the images, [and] counter the spectacle

with even more spectacular spectacles.”²⁰ As useful and prevalent as this strategy may be, it is in contradistinction to the principles of neorealism.

The transformative nature of neorealist films resides in the absence of spectacle, artifice, and escapism. Instead, it relies on a more objective portrayal of contemporary reality that cleaves history from the conceptualization of Italian unity, favoring instead the poetic aspects of everyday life over allusion and metaphor. Through an emphasis and celebration of local and regional specificity, neorealist films expose the failures of Fascism’s equation of nationalism with grandiose moments from the Roman Empire, the Renaissance, and the Risorgimento. Aggrandizements of historical episodes meant vastly different things to peoples in different regions of the nation. The Renaissance, and in particular, the Risorgimento, were not inherently national. Different regions experienced these movements dissimilarly. In particular, southern Italians viewed these “glorious pasts” with times of exclusion, alienation, and subjugation. Such sentiments were reinforced by the fact that Fascism’s support base was strongest in the urban North. As a distinctly regional movement, then, Fascism “set on establishing stability to northern industry and commercial agriculture of the Po Valley.”²¹ This endeavor ultimately compounded the view of Fascism’s self-anointed task of completing the unfinished business of the Risorgimento as “a failure, in that revolutionary goals were betrayed by the subsequent hegemony of the North over the South.”²²

Thematically, the uniting factor of the master works of neorealism, including Luchino Visconti’s *Ossessione* (Obsession, 1943) and *La terra trema*, Vittorio De Sica’s *I bambini ci guardano* (The Children Are Watching Us, 1944), *Sciuscià* (Shoeshine, 1946), and *Ladri di biciclette* (The Bicycle Thief, 1948), Alberto Lattuada’s *Il Mulino del Po* (The Mill on the Po, 1948) and *Senza pietà* (Without Pity, 1948), Roberto Rosellini’s *Roma, città aperta* (Rome:

Open City, 1945), *Paisà* (Paisan, 1946), and *Stromboli, terra di dio* (Stromboli, Land of God, 1949), Giuseppe De Santis' *Caccia tragica* (The Tragic Hunt, 1947), *Riso Amaro* (Bitter Rice, 1949) and *Non c'è pace tra gli ulivi* (No Peace Under the Olive Tree, 1950), and Luigi Zampa's *Vivere in pace* (To Live in Peace, 1947) is a concern for representing the ordinary and everyday struggles of the working class in the uncertain climate of postwar reconstruction. By “minimizing the effects of spectacle,” neorealist films provided “direct access to the images by means of long take photography and minimal editing, and through middle distance shots that could enable the viewer to assimilate the character’s specific relationship to the environment.”²³ Through transformation of the iconographic tropes central to Fascist cinema, neorealism posited a new path toward Italian national unity. Key was the encouragement of a collectivity via the elemental struggle to survive, a condition afflicting all Italians, across regions and classes, in the environment of postwar recovery.

Iconographies of Reinvention

Of the plenitude of semiotic devices utilized by Fascist propagandists throughout all media, four themes are most relevant to the scope of this project: crowds, landscape, youth, and poverty. Given the focus on Italian nationalism in film, these subjects of representation are all, albeit in differing ways, related to concepts of belonging, identity, inclusion/exclusion, and citizenship (in terms of rightful contribution to and defining qualities thereof). They are also among the most prevalent topics entertained by both Fascist and neorealist cinema. This allows for contrast and comparison at the level of film genre of the most problematic sociocultural issues of the postwar environment. With the exception of youth, these themes also contain a geographical dimension in that the desire to control the *representation* of space is embroiled in

the broader project of defining acceptable uses of both public and private and urban and rural spaces on the ground.

In neorealist films, crowds become sites of resistance and localized allegiance as opposed to symbols of occupation and submission. The conquest of nature and both national and international space is eschewed, replaced by emphasis on the symbiotic relationship between cultural practice and the environment. The idealized portrayal of Fascist urban luxury and modernization of city space is deconstructed through a presentation of pervasive urban poverty. Youth, in its most elementary form, is symbolic of the fledging postwar republic. However, it is also a theme ripe with connotations concerning state education and welfare and, in the case of neorealism, innocence lost to the reworking of traditional familial roles demanded by postwar plight. For all involved in the exposition of the neorealist viewpoint, it was essential to counter the iconographic tropes central to the Fascist representation of the nation. Equally vital was a necessity to posit a determined and cohesive semiotic explication of nationalism that would stand as an alternative ideological construction of the postwar nation.

Crowds

As the symbolic embodiment of the masses, the divergent portrayal of the crowd in neorealist films is indicative of the desire to empower those marginalized under Fascism through the representation of a collective will. As Lizzani has indicated, crowds in Fascist films exist largely “as a passive amalgam—an indistinct, orderly, militarized mass . . . a colorful, vociferous, applauding chorus that forms a backdrop for one character or another. In other words, the crowd is folklore—the populist, rural collectivity that corresponds to Fascist

populism.”²⁴ Epitomized by scenes in *Scipione l’africano*, the crowd is devoid of any individuality or affect, imagined instead as subservient to and blindly supportive of the patriotic rhetoric spewed forth by a charismatic leader [Fig. 2.1].

In contrast, neorealist depictions of crowds are characterized by activeness, both in their portrayal of the dialectics *within* the crowd itself and as sites of rebellion and resistance to authority. In the climactic sequence of *Roma, città aperta*, the character of Pina ardently attempts to rally the crowd that has assembled as the Germans round up the men of the neighborhood. When her lover, Francesco, is taken away, Pina physically confronts the SS officers constraining the crowd. Breaking free from an officer, Pina runs to the truck where Francesco is being held, only to be shot and killed in the process. Instead of solidifying the complacency and fear of the crowd bearing witness, Rossellini’s suggestion is that resistance, even if it leads to death, is a necessity of freedom, and passivity will no longer be tolerated.

Rebellion is a central tenet of the crowd scenes in *Il Mulino del Po* as well; however, the effects of resistance are decidedly more optimistic than in *Roma, città aperta*. Lattuada’s film centers on day laborers who work the wheat fields of the Po Valley under miserable conditions for little pay and reward. When their dissatisfaction culminates with a refusal to work, landowners call in the military to force them back to the fields. Rather than submit, the workers (predominantly women) occupy the fields. As the soldiers prepare to fire upon them, the crowd stands united, shouting “up with the union!,” forcing the military to acquiesce rather than become agents of mass murder. In this instance, Lattuada conveys how the collective spirit has the capacity to institute change.

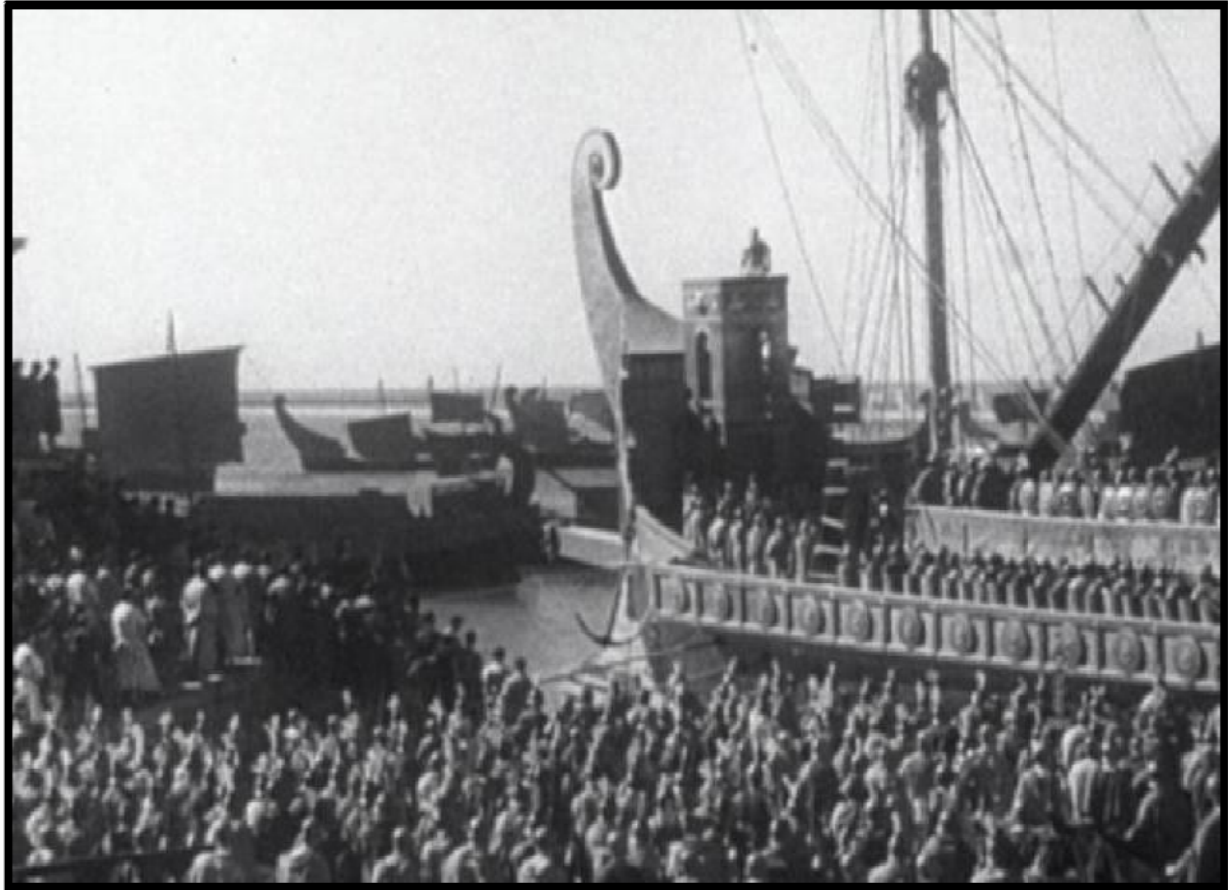


Figure 2.1. *Scipione l'africano*, 1937. The masses exhibit a holistic loyalty to imperialist endeavors in Fascist film.

Along with serving as a vehicle to oppose authority, neorealist filmmakers also envision crowds as instruments of localized unity. This is particularly evident in a scene from *Ladri di biciclette* in which the central character of Antonio Ricci confronts the young man who has stolen his bicycle. Antonio follows him to his neighborhood, but when he tries to force him to return his vital property, a crowd assembles in support of the thief. To the crowd, it is unimportant whether the boy is guilty of the crime or not. Paramount is the protection of one of their own from the perceived persecution of an outsider [Fig. 2.2].

Landscape

As part of the desire to equate the nation with historical episodes of cultural and political dominance, Fascist depictions of the Italian landscape often glorified majestic and monumental aspects of the city. The verticality inherent in their images of urban architecture, ancient ruins, and state monuments is symbolic of Fascist hierarchical social stratification. Public space is closed, sanitized; it is organized around artifice and icons, heralding the projects of architectural modernity and redesign undertaken during the *ventennio nero*. Their depictions of the rural landscape stressed the picturesque, suggesting an essentialized harmony between the agrarian peasantry and the land. Conversely, neorealist treatments of landscape reflect a horizontal rather than vertical linearity. From depictions of the long banks of the Po River and its valley in *Riso Amaro*, *Paisà*, and *Il Mulino del Po* to the expansive, desolate environments of southern Italy and the islands in *Stromboli* and *La terra trema*, the picturesque is eschewed in favor of more realistic treatments of interior spaces and naturalistic physical landscapes. Space becomes open, active, and affective.



Figure 2.2. *Ladri di biciclette*, 1948. The crowd organizes against the threat of an outsider.

Although many films have focused on realistic presentations of rural life (particularly associated with the Mezzogiorno), the predominant setting of neorealist works is what Lizzani has referred to as “the great urban periphery.”²⁵ This location embodies the lived experience of the marginalized working classes, and is characterized by a lack of monuments and other Fascist artifice. It represents peoples and places excluded under Fascism and offers a new site of collective association based less on symbols of ascendancy and state virility than on the social conditions of poverty, unemployment, the breakdown of the family, and the uncertainty of the future. *Ladri di biciclette* is the most cogent example in this regard. Set in Rome, this film follows the protagonist Antonio and his son Bruno as they move from neighborhood to neighborhood in search of Antonio’s stolen bicycle. Throughout their quest, Rome is rendered devoid of symbolic greatness. There is no Colosseum, Vatican, Trevi fountain, or Roman Forum, no monuments, roads, and buildings from Mussolini’s EUR district.²⁶ In their stead, De Sica presents the ordinary working-class neighborhoods, peddlers’ markets, unemployment offices, and trolley stops [Fig. 2.3]. By stripping Rome of all things Roman, De Sica’s portrayal allows working-class urbanites from Milan, Naples, Palermo, and elsewhere to identify with the plight of the Ricci family.

Youth

As a primary concern of Fascist ideologues and planners, the representation of youth constituted a vital role in the overtly propagandist films of the 1930s. Documentaries and newsreels produced by L’Unione Cinematografica Educativa (LUCE), the state organization overseeing the production of pro-Fascist cinema, “highlighted the relation of youth to education, the military, and to sports,” in essence utilizing children as a metaphor for the rejuvenating



Figure 2.3. *Ladri di biciclette*, 1948. The ordinary landscape of the Roman periphery.

qualities of the Fascist movement. Numerous documentaries championed socialization policies specific to children, including the vitality of youth groups, adolescent patriotism, and the reduction of juvenile delinquency. As Elaine Mancini has noted, these documentaries “were designed to instill the Fascist spirit, to teach ideals and to enforce discipline.”²⁷

Blasetti’s film, *Vecchia guardia* (Old Guard, 1934) epitomizes such glorifications. The story revolves around a young boy named Mario whose death at the hands of the Socialists renders him a martyr to the Fascist cause. Other films, including *Camicia nera* (Black Shirt, 1933), herald the crucial involvement of children in the *squadristi*, the “marauding bands of black-shirted adherents to Fascism” who “terror[ized] the populace.”²⁸ An underlying theme is that children exist as blank slates, and that regimented indoctrination via the Fascist redesign of the educational system and reinforcement of the traditional family can squash the potential for youthful recidivism.

In contrast, neorealist depictions locate children outside the formal educational system, embroiled in everyday and real-world struggles to survive in the postwar environment. Children are stripped of their innocence, left unprotected as the traditional family disintegrates, often orphaned as a consequence of the war and forced to fend for themselves. The reassurance of a sheltered domestic life is gone as boys are impelled to take on the role of provider and girls the role of caregiver. *Sciuscià* offers a particularly acute example. Set in Rome immediately after the war, the film follows the trials and tribulations of two young boys, Pasquale and Giuseppe, who live on the streets and earn a paltry existence by shining shoes and shaking down American G.I.s. The boys land in reform school, where a series of events dissolves their solidarity [Fig. 2.4].



Figure 2.4. *Sciuscià*, 1946. The idealist view of childhood is countered by the reality faced by youths in the postwar environment.

Loss of innocence is also echoed in the second vignette of *Paisà*, wherein a young boy named Pasquale “buys the rights” from his fellow street-gang members to pilfer the belongings of an American soldier named Joe. At first, Pasquale approaches Joe as a helpful hand, yet when Joe passes out drunk, the boy steals his boots. Several days later, Joe catches up to Pasquale and forces the boy to take him to his home in order to retrieve the boots. As Pasquale leads him to the caves of Mergellina outside of Naples where he and hundreds of others, forced from their homes by the war, live in squalor, Joe learns that the boy’s parents have been killed. Realizing the boy’s plight, Joe leaves the boots behind as an act of sympathetic charity. His intention of having the boy punished is now meaningless since Pasquale no longer exists in the realm of childhood.

The situation of boys forced to assume the role of men is reiterated by the relationship between Bruno and his father, Antonio, in *Ladri di biciclette*. Scarcity of employment has required Bruno to work as a gas-station attendant to supplement the family income, somewhat reversing the traditional relationship between father and son. The morning after his bicycle is stolen, Antonio is too ashamed to tell Bruno. Later on, when Antonio confronts the thief and is subsequently accosted by the crowd, Bruno protects his father by having the wherewithal to summon the police. In the penultimate scene, after he is caught stealing another person’s bicycle, a desperate and humiliated Antonio seeks forgiveness from Bruno. Bruno is forced to stand strong, consoling his distraught father by taking his hand as the two walk towards the camera and an uncertain future.

Poverty

Whereas the treatment of youth reflects the realities of social change in the immediate postwar period, it is the injection of poverty and its associated destructive elements that provides the greatest unifying symbol for neorealist films. This emphasis serves two purposes. First, it acts as a response to Fascist valorizations of urban and rural life. It is no surprise that images of destitution and economic hardship are almost entirely absent from Fascist depictions of society. Whereas city life, as conveyed through the *telefono bianco* and *stracittà* films prevalent in the 1930s, was one of luxury, cosmopolitanism, and leisure and, the country was predominantly framed as simple and satisfying, neorealist cinema stresses economic plight in these settings. It represents the groups of Italian society excluded from Fascist interpretations of the nation. The images of downtrodden working classes in both the city (e.g. *Paisà*, *Roma*, *città aperta*, and *Ladri di biciclette*) and the country (e.g. *Stromboli*, *Riso Amaro*, and *Osessione*) counter the idealization of Fascist modernization principles and economic advancement.

The presentation of poverty that characterized the Italian postwar environment also functions as a great social equalizer in its suggestion that all citizens, regardless of class, region, and urban and rural location, are confronted by the same struggle to survive. The myths of cultural backwardness and economic stagnation historically connected to the South are thereby transformed into national issues. In such, the Mezzogiorno is renewed as the lynchpin of Italian unity because southerners could offer tactics of survival to an industrialized North in which widespread economic plight was largely a new phenomenon. Rather than language or a shared relationship to history, the primary basis of Italian unity is transferred to the collective task of rebuilding both the physical and social landscapes after the war. The endemic nature of

destitution wipes the slate clean, breaking down social and regional stratifications and fostering new concepts of unity that allow for the retention of cultural heterogeneity.

Re-imagining the Basis for National Unity in Visconti's *La terra trema*

In terms of form, technique, and content, *La terra trema* is the most salient effort of neorealist film in positing a new path to Italian unity. Realism is inherent in Visconti's construction of image and narrative and in his choice of subject. Shot entirely on location in the fishing village of Aci Trezza, Sicily, the film employed no studio or sound sets. The only utilization of artificial lighting occurred during night scenes at sea. There are no professional actors—the characters in the film are all members of the local community. Moreover, instead of post-synching or dubbing the sound, Visconti captured authentic sounds and voices of the town. In doing so, “he took a revolutionary cultural stance, refusing standard Italian (as well as the official culture it symbolized) for the dialect of the simple people he filmed, believing that the authentic expression of the people's emotions could only be achieved using their own language.”²⁹ Since Sicilian was largely unintelligible to the mainland audience, Visconti added voice-over narration and subtitles in standard (Tuscan) Italian. His construction of images through long, single shots, slow, wide-angle pans, and stationary, extreme depth-of-field frames reflects the formalist aspects attributed to documentary film. Great attention is also paid to realistic interiors and family life. Stylistically, *La terra trema* employs the cinematic conventions ascribed to neorealism more so than any other film.

Thematically, Visconti incorporated attention to *verismo* unequalled in any other neorealist work. The film itself is based on Verga's novel *I Malavoglia* (The House by the

Medlar Tree, 1881), a story that follows a family of Sicilian fishermen (the Malavoglias) and their aspirations for a better life in the wake of Garibaldi's liberation of Sicily. Visconti's adaptation serves two purposes. On the one hand, it acts as a platform for discussion of the Southern Question, instigating a renewed consideration of how the South "has been taken to emblemize the problem of state formation since 1859."³⁰ On the other, it entertains the possibility, owing to Antonio Gramsci, of a national-popular alliance between southern agricultural peasants and northern industrial workers. This hope is highlighted by initial funding for the film from the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and, by the original vision for *La terra trema* as part of a trilogy documenting southern fishermen, miners, and agrarian peasants (hence the subtitle *Episodio del mare*).

The support for the film by the PCI is indicative of the broader political ethos underpinning neorealist cinema. The years between the end of the war (1945) and the establishment of the new Italian Constitution (1948) were marked by great political upheavals as multiple parties, including the PCI, the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), the Labor Democratic Party (PDL), the Action Party (Pd'A), and the Christian Democratic Party (DC) that had been outlawed under Fascism sought to reorganize, realign, and concretize support for their own nationalist projects. The general election of 1946 reduced the number of parties with any realistic chance of establishing parliamentary dominance to three: the DC, which garnered 35% of the vote, the PSI (20%), and the PCI (19%). In this same year, the results of the Referendum on the Monarchy illustrated in sharp detail the political differences of the populace from region to region. Northern regions voted to abolish the monarchy and oust the King of Italy, but the vast majority of southerners voted for retention. Whereas the center-right DC maintained its strongest support in the north, particularly in the northeast (*la zona bianca*), the PCI found the majority of

its backing in the central regions (*la zona rossa*). As a result, the South, including Sicily and Sardinia, and the northwest regions centered around the “industrial triangle” became the areas of greatest competition between the two parties.³¹

Owing largely to Gramsci’s influence, the PCI heavily promoted an alliance between northern industrial workers and southern peasants. This party had always appealed to working-class consciousness, but the particular postwar environment offered opportunity to expand its support beyond the proletariat. Given the leveling of hierarchical class divisions brought about by wartime devastation, the PCI sought to outline a broad-based populist collectivity by using multiple media outlets to present the pervasiveness of postwar socioeconomic strife. The party therefore lauded many neorealist directors and films of this period for their realistic modes of presentation and overarching emphasis on the unifying elements inherent in the struggle to survive. In this respect, *La terra trema* represented an impeccable vehicle with which to promote a new form of national alliance.

Visconti’s adaptation centers on the Valastro clan, multiple generations of fishermen and their wives, sisters, and daughters who live together in a modest seaside home. The central character is one of the sons named ‘Ntoni, who more than anyone else, aspires to free the family from long-standing exploitation by local wholesalers [Fig. 2.5]. Because the wholesalers own the boats and maintain exclusive contracts with the city markets, they control prices. As ‘Ntoni’s anger boils over, he hatches a plan to mortgage the family house in order to buy their own boat. This plan is met with resistance, particularly from the family’s older generation. In a crucial scene, ‘Ntoni’s grandfather repeats a common saying among the Sicilian poor that “you can learn to live with injustice.” ‘Ntoni’s response, that “old proverbs don’t work anymore,” is reflective



Figure 2.5. *La terra trema*, 1948. 'Ntoni plots to free himself and his family from the oppression of wholesalers.

of Visconti's underlying notion of the need to escape the past in order to reinvent social relations.

After the family acquiesces and the boat is purchased, 'Ntoni relishes in the potential realization of his bourgeois dreams and flaunts his new position of economic freedom to the chagrin of his neighbors. His dream, however, abruptly ends when the clan is forced to fish in bad weather in order to make the mortgage payment. The storm destroys their vessel, leaving 'Ntoni and his brothers to seek employment on the boats of others. The neighbors, however, turn them away as a consequence of their perceived betrayal of their fellow fishermen and the threat of dismissal by the wholesalers whom the Valastros have scorned. Without employment, the bank eventually forecloses on the house and the Valastros are forced to move. A telling scene where 'Ntoni encounters a young girl repairing his former boat illustrates how he finally "realizes his fatal error in basing his hopes on the traditional family rather than on a new sense of class consciousness and unity."³²

In a crucial scene that follows, 'Ntoni's awareness of his personal and familial plight is transferred to the nation as whole. Framed in close-up, 'Ntoni addresses the camera (and consequently the audience) directly, stating: "We have to learn to stick up for each other, to stick together. Then we can go forward" In an act of self-sacrificial martyrdom, he then returns to the office of the wholesalers who, in the process of granting him his old job on one of their boats, humiliate him further in front of his peers. Behind the laughing wholesalers' boss we see the washed-over remnants of the Fascist slogan "*Andare decisamente verso il popolo*" painted on the wall [Fig. 2.6]. Whereas the image is meant to associate the corrupt and unsympathetic wholesalers with the Fascist regime, the slogan's faded condition also suggests that, in time, the effects of that repressive period will disappear, allowing a more just and equitable sense of



Figure 2.6. *La terra trema*, 1948. The stain of Fascism remains.

nationhood to take its place. In the final scene, the camera focuses on 'Ntoni returned to his former place on the wholesalers' boat. Rather than resignation or defeat, his facial expression and intensity indicate a simmering rage [Fig. 2.7]. Amidst the overwhelming tragedy of the film, the viewer is led to believe that 'Ntoni is not done fighting, and that dreams of a more egalitarian world lie just beyond the approaching horizon.

Beyond Realism

The neorealist film genre developed in a period of radical political openness and social uncertainty, a time prior to the consolidation of power by the Christian Democrats in the national elections of 1948. Leading up to the Parliamentary election, several parties of the left, including the PCI, PSI, Christian Social Party (PCS), Labor Democratic Party (PDL), and the Sardinian Action Party had joined together in an historic compromise, casting away ideological (and regional) differences in order to better challenge the DC. With its defeat, however, this Popular Democratic Front (FDP) dissolved as quickly as it had formed, taking with it the entire movement toward nation-scale political organization and orientation. In its place came a “regionalizing regime” lasting until the early 1960s in which the dominant political parties focused their energies on solidifying traditional geographical centers of support.³³

The waning popularity of neorealist films in the late 1940s is partly attributable to escapism being an inherent aspect of the cinematic medium. Audiences grew tired of confronting images and issues related to their postwar struggles, and favored instead the American spectacles and melodramas that had begun to inundate theaters as a consequence of United States involvement in Italian reconstruction. The political distaste for neorealist projections of the



Figure 1.7. *La terra trema*, 1948. 'Ntoni's revolutionary spirit cannot be broken.

nation compounded the decline. Neorealism's association with the PCI and the left became a target of the Christian Democrats who had substantial support (and consequently pressure from) the United States owing to the global battle against communism. The Andreotti Law of 1949 threatened censorship (and a denial of distribution rights) to filmmakers who presented "unfavorable" conditions of Italian life while offering financial subsidies to those who championed the integrative and positive qualities of the DC.

Neorealism largely evolved into the light-hearted and star-studded films of "pink" neorealism in the early 1950s—decidedly more optimistic endeavors that heralded the betterment of social conditions tied to the beginning phases of Italy's economic miracle. The decline in popularity of neorealist projects was also symptomatic of the unattainability of the idealism underlying much of the political motivation behind these films. Through their uncompromisingly realistic presentation of postwar poverty, unemployment, and fractured families, neorealist cinema projected a belief in the inevitability of a national-popular alliance free of class, ethnic, and regional antagonisms. Ironically, frequent audience perception of a narrative pessimism in numerous neorealist films occluded their deeper ideological optimism and political idealism. The simple presentation of unifying "social truths" on the screen did not necessarily render them real amongst the populace.

To their credit, neorealist films such as *La terra trema* returned the Southern Question to the forefront of debate surrounding Italian nationalism. Whereas the South had been viewed since the Risorgimento as the greatest obstacle in the path to Italian unity, neorealist depictions of the Mezzogiorno annulled long-standing characterizations of the region as archaic, socially disintegrated, and foreign. By highlighting similarities in work ethic, moral practice, and social organization that united cultural practice between the regions, this genre repositioned the South

from a relationship of dependence on northern largess to one of mutual benefit. Though embedded in a specific period of postwar Italian history, film neorealism has proven to be a valuable influence on subsequent Italian and international filmmakers intent on challenging hegemonic models of society, place, and identity. From the French New Wave, to Pier Paolo Pasolini's investigation of the homogenizing effect of Italian modernization and consumerism (*Comizi d'amore*, Love Meetings, 1965), to activist documentary projects from the developing world, neorealist cinematic techniques continue to be utilized for their contestatory modes of presentation. In the realm of representation, realism has become a salient mechanism for sociocultural interrogation. This is where the legacy of neorealism shines brightest.

Chapter 3

The Periphery of Modernity: An Overview of Cinema and the South during the Economic Miracle

Nineteen fifty-seven was a watershed year for the Italian State. Although one is hard-pressed to find such gravitas granted to it in popular historical accounts, the year nonetheless marked the convergence of three transformative events that would contribute greatly to the political, economic, and cultural directions of the nation in the ensuing two decades. As a consequence, the Southern Question once again rose to the forefront. The signing of the Treaty of Rome in March ushered in a new era of Italian international and intracontinental affiliations with the foundation of the European Economic Community (EEC or Common Market). Directly correlated to this was the transformation of the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* into Phase II, characterized by the agency's widespread reorganization and redirection of its development policies toward the South. Of lesser relation but of equal importance culturally and economically, 1957 denoted the first year since 1943 that American films garnered less than fifty percent of domestic box-office receipts.¹ Together, all three factors either required or provided for new methods of engaging the long-standing difficulties of incorporating the South into the rapidly modernizing State.

The Treaty of Rome and its Implications for the South

Symbolically, the Treaty of Rome represented the graduation of the Italian Republic from fledgling to flight. In ten years, Italians transformed themselves from a physically decimated and politically alienated nation into the tenth-largest economy in the world. The importance of the treaty being signed in Rome was astutely understood by the leadership of the Christian

Democratic Party (DC), who relished the opportunity to showcase Italy's remarkable economic recovery via the international news media. The metaphor of Rome (and thus the Republic) rising from the ashes of World War II like a phoenix was invoked by the Secretary of the DC, Amintore Fanfani, to suggest the almost supernatural rapidity of the nation's reascension to international prominence.² In reality, the treaty signaled the emergence of Italy from under the often heavy-handed influence of the United States, which had played a pivotal role in the political victories of the DC during the immediate postwar period and in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Italy by way of Marshall Plan aid.³ The Treaty of Rome had two overt and related purposes for Italy. First, it offered leverage against the perceived dictatorial nature of American financial aid in which numerous structural reforms in the Italian monetary, trade, labor, and bureaucratic systems were prerequisite. Second, the EEC would provide a degree of continental influence and open up new and geographically closer markets for exports, the driving force behind Italy's economic miracle. This second purpose was an obvious necessity for achieving the first. With Marshall Plan aid depleted and further financial investment from the United States and the International Monetary Fund replete with preconditions, the nascent EEC coffers provided more discretionary allocation of resources. In the ensuing years, this strategy proved to be successful. Italy would reap the most rewards in sheer currency amounts from loans distributed by the European Investment Bank (EIB), the European Agricultural Fund (EAF), and the European Social Fund (ESF). Between 1959 and 1969, 58% of all loans from the EIB went to the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* with an additional 25% and 33% of all loans granted by the EAF and ESF respectively, going to Italy.⁴

As a founding member of the EEC, Italy increased its influence at the continental and, to some degree, the international scales. This outward-oriented approach to economic growth was

not without direct consequences at the national and regional scales. In an idealist sense, the establishment of the EEC was heralded as the first step towards a Europe united by the expansion of social-democratic rights, the unhindered mobility of peoples and capital, and a unified transportation infrastructure, all of which would foster an integrated geopolitical alliance. In practice, the EEC operated almost exclusively for the next thirty years as an economic free-trade union between member states.⁵ Central facets of the agreement included the abrogation of all tariff barriers between member states over a transitional twelve-year period (later shortened to ten years) and the establishment of a Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The CAP enacted both a free market for agricultural goods inside the EEC and a level of protectionism against imported products from nonmember nations via subsidies, tariffs, and guaranteed prices. At the national scale, these tenets seemed immensely favorable to Italy, similar to the advantages gained through its membership in the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC).

A precursor to the EEC, the ECSC was founded in 1952 and signed by Italy, France, West Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg to promote heavy-industry development in member states through the abolition of tariffs on coal and steel. This proved a major boon for Italy. With coal being the *sine qua non* of Italian industrialization and the nation terribly lacking in domestic reserves, membership immediately reduced importation costs from its northern neighbors. In tandem, the Italian steel industry, owing largely to protectionist policies under Fascism and the chance survival of its infrastructure during World War II, had developed in the postwar years as the principle engine of industrial growth. Exports of iron ore and finished steel products accounted for thirty-eight percent on average of total export-earned revenue per year between 1949 and 1956.⁶ Similar EEC reductions in trade barriers for industry and agriculture would, in theory, provide Italy with almost limitless capacity to expand national

economic growth through the exploitation of comparative advantage and thus the unbridled continuation of its export-oriented industrialization.

At the regional level within Italy, however, benefits of EEC membership could not have been more asymmetric. In 1957, an estimated eighty-five percent of industrial capacity was located in the North, with an overwhelming concentration in the “industrial triangle” delineated by Turin, Genoa, and Milan.⁷ In agriculture, the Po Valley contained a similar staggering advantage over the rest of the peninsula in production and value-added amounts. As the only agricultural plain with a consistent and ample water supply, the Po Valley required substantially smaller networks and reliance on irrigation.⁸ Also, due in large part to the autarkic agenda of the Fascist regime, the Po Valley possessed the greatest concentration of pre-existing, large-scale commercial agriculture in Italy. Furthermore, agriculture in the area was predominantly capital- rather than labor-intensive, implying a lesser degree of volatility. Established cooperatives and rural credit unions facilitated the sharing of machinery at affordable rates and simultaneously fostered the dissemination of innovative methods. By way of the cooperatives and the protectionist policies of the State towards grain crops, farmers in the Po Valley had pre-existing access to markets outside of Italy and already provided the greatest share of the country’s agricultural exports.⁹ Although the removal of all agricultural tariffs in accordance with the CAP would have a detrimental effect on local wheat production in particular, this short-term loss was outweighed by an enormous gain through the exportation of a more diversified cache.¹⁰ The North, as a result, had everything to gain and nothing to lose from the free-trade agreement.

The South, on the other hand, had nothing to gain and everything to lose. For people there, the scheme of comparative advantage and protection-free trade amounted to very little. The small percentage of industrial enterprises that the South possessed were ill-suited to compete

against their northern counterparts let alone those outside the border. By 1961, value-added by industrial employee was still only 60% of northern levels, and 44% of southern industrial workers were employed by firms of ten employees or less versus only 20% in the North.¹¹ Perhaps more telling, fewer than 10% of southern industrial workers were employed by firms of more than a hundred employees. Southern industry as a whole was obviously in no position to take advantage of economies of scale, a central logic of comparative advantage. Geographically, the extended distance from newly emerging northern European markets and a lack of quality transportation infrastructure connecting the South to the North exacerbated the weakness of their position. Serious work on the expansion of the *Autostrada del Sole*, the primary highway system connecting Milan to Naples via Rome, was not begun until 1956 and not finished until 1964. The total length of all road networks in the South prior to 1961 equaled 42,897 kilometers compared to 128,322 kilometers in the North.¹² Allan Rodgers has noted that the rail system was equally poor in terms of density and integration. Existent southern railroad lines in 1957 were almost entirely bifurcated between the Adriatic and Tyrrhenian coastal areas with little connection through or to the Apennine Highlands.¹³

In terms of agriculture, physical-environmental factors that for centuries had impeded productivity and intensification in the South proved just as difficult to overcome in the postwar years. The Mediterranean climate, characterized by higher average temperatures, lower annual precipitation and greater seasonal variation compared to the North, greatly limited the variety of commercial crops that could be grown in surplus. The scarcity and uneven distribution of water rendered private irrigation opportunities both minimal and costly. Alan Mountjoy has estimated that, of all cultivated land in the South in 1951, forty-nine percent was without drainage systems whatsoever.¹⁴ The paucity of water supplies for intensive agriculture is worsened by the

predominant landforms of the South. The Apennine Mountains that form the spine of the peninsula are primarily dolomitic and karstic in the Mezzogiorno. Dolomite produces a landscape dominated by steep-sloped peaks and hillsides with sparse soil cover and vegetation. Where karst prevails (in the Murge regions of Puglia and Basilicata), the high permeability of the limestone makes surface water almost nonexistent. Of all cultivated lands in the Mezzogiorno in 1957, an estimated fifty-six percent was on land sloped fifteen degrees or more.¹⁵ Where plains existed, a high percentage of marshlands deterred intensive agricultural endeavors. The Fascist program of *bonifica integrale* had attempted to drain southern marshlands and eradicate malaria-carrying mosquitoes. However, this progress was almost entirely lost in the first decade after the war as the State switched development priorities to land reform and redistribution efforts. In sum, the physical-environmental attributes of the South are more conducive to extensive, labor-intensive, subsistence agriculture than to intensive commercial endeavors. This grim outlook for development is also prior to any mention of entrenched structural problems of the South that, in turn, aggravate the region's position of competitive weakness.

Despite concerted efforts by the State in the immediate postwar period to reform land ownership in the South,¹⁶ the *latifundia* system prevailed throughout the 1950s, greatly retarding private investment in the intensification and mechanization of agriculture and the creation of associated fixed capital. Reform policies did little to enhance the position of the southern peasantry. Land redistribution, while socially appeasing, actually amplified the fragmentation of southern agriculture. Between 1949 and 1956, the percentage of farmland in holdings of ten or fewer noncontiguous plots increased from eleven to twenty percent, resulting in a pattern that “does not favor modern mechanized methods of farming nor facilitate crop specialization” and “conflicts with the economic trend under the EEC which is for larger operating units in order to

enjoy economies of scale.”¹⁷ In total, the *Enti di Riforma* expropriated less than ten percent (approximately 800,000 hectares) of all lands under its jurisdiction. In the South, 90,000 families were granted new ownership of land. Although substantial, this total equaled less than fifteen percent of the entire landless population of the region, ultimately creating a small, privileged class of subproletariats.¹⁸

Attempts at agrarian reform had an equally minimal effect on the labor force. Underemployment in the agricultural workforce persisted at prewar levels throughout the early 1950s with the overwhelming majority of the labor force consisting of day-laborers (*braccianti*) employed only 100-150 days out of the year.¹⁹ The little large-scale commercial agriculture that existed in the South became heavily dependent on state protectionism and subsidies during Phase I of the Cassa, defined by a program of “assistance over incentive.” In practice, this amounted to a retrenchment of clientelistic relationships. As a crucial class of southern support for the DC, southern landowners received payments in the forms of subsidies, soft loans, grants, bail-outs, tax incentives, and positions within the state bureaucracy in exchange for their votes. As Alan Zuckerman has discovered, a paltry amount of the total public-to-private financial investment from the Cassa during Phase I actually went towards “improvements in mechanization, irrigation, crop-specialization, new technological applications, farm-to-market infrastructural improvements, higher peasant wages or employment of a greater number of laborers. Per the nature of the exchange, southern landowners met little recourse in spending the money however they pleased.”²⁰

As a consequence of these underlying environmental and structural conditions, the only comparative export advantage forecast for the South by signers of the Treaty of Rome was in tree and vine crops and their associated oils.²¹ This grim outlook would only be worsened over the

following ten years by the gradual removal of all protectionist barriers. Italy's membership in the EEC sealed the dependency of southern agriculture upon local and regional markets. As competition from fellow member states increased, focus on the transformation of southern agriculture from semi-feudal to semi-modern shifted to the broader national interest of consolidation, mechanization, and crop specialization in northern agriculture. In effect, then, the formation of the EEC served as the death knell for Phase I of the Cassa. The program's original emphasis on assistance, reform, and redistribution of southern agriculture was shortly abandoned in favor of the wholesale promotion of southern industry.

Industrialization, Emigration, and the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*

Phase II of the Cassa represented a major ideological shift on the part of the State for southern development and regional incorporation. The common logic under Phase I was that modernization of the agricultural sector in combination with sweeping improvements in public-works infrastructure and land reform would foster greater efficiency, growth, and employment in the Mezzogiorno. However, the slowness and localized nature of economic growth attributed to such a "first-aid," relief-based approach to agricultural development quickly created doubts within the central government regarding its applicability to national growth models outlined by Keynesian economic theory. Though perhaps necessary to the social integration of the South and thus the political hegemony of the DC, investments in social fixed capital contributed little to the nation's economy. Also, emphasis on agricultural expansion as a palliative for regional underemployment and disintegration contradicted the principal rationale of development theories. These favored secondary- and tertiary-sector growth as requisites for "take-off."²² As early as 1953, the secretaries of the Ministries of Industry and Commerce, Labor and Social

Welfare, and the Treasury (three of the seven overseeing agencies of the Cassa) suggested drastic redirection of Cassa investment away from agriculture and into industrial infrastructural development.²³ The model of national growth based on the complementarity of southern agriculture and northern industry, largely a political remnant of the Fascist regime, was supplanted by a new plan weighted heavily on the promise of export-oriented industrialization.

The beginning of Phase II was marked by enforcement of an earlier law enacted under the Cassa. From 1957 on, sixty percent of all domestic industrial investment from state agencies had to occur in the South. Furthermore, by 1964 the State was required to expend forty percent of total national public investment in the Mezzogiorno. In the ensuing decade, this weight was carried most heavily by agencies under the direction of the Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale (IRI), including Italsider (iron and steel), Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi (ENI – oil and gas), and Breda (mechanical engineering).²⁴ A correlated encouragement of private industrial investment was centered on the automobile industry, symbolized by substantial incentive-based support of a new Fiat plant in Naples. In all, State-led industrial investment during Phase II revolved around a program of regional redistribution of existing industrial strengths as opposed to a facilitation of endogenous, small-scale southern industries.²⁵

Following this logic, the methodology underlying the distribution of public funds was based upon the tenets of the Industrial Areas Law passed in 1957 and its call to identify “Areas of Industrial Investment” and “Nuclei of Industrialization.” As a primary contributor to Cassa aid, the EEC played an important role in these determinations. Identified as “the Common Market countries’ most under-developed area,” the EEC’s interest in the Mezzogiorno was in accordance with the specific language of the Treaty of Rome that outlined the need for a “reduction in the inequality in the economic development of different regions within the

community.”²⁶ In 1959, the EEC designated five “industrial development zones” in the Mezzogiorno: Bari, Brindisi, Naples, Taranto, and Palermo. Not surprisingly, given the EEC and Italy’s shared commitment to export-oriented growth, these “areas” were the largest port cities in the South. These urban centers were determined to be the only ones with enough existing transportation infrastructure and surplus labor to support large-scale industrial projects.

The consensus belief was that the establishment of such State-funded heavy-industry “anchors” would, in turn, attract private investment in the form of lighter industries. In the case of Bari, Brindisi, and Taranto, much was made of creating a southern “industrial triangle” to mirror that of the North. This growth-pole approach hinged upon the notion of a ripple effect, whereby concentrations of large-scale industry in a limited number of centers would encourage the emergence of external economies that would eventually expand outward throughout the region, providing consumer goods, services, and jobs to smaller urban and rural areas.

Although the industry-led development policy of Phase II was heralded as a salient attempt to redistribute capital and earnings potential from the most rapidly growing sector of the northern economy to the South, in reality it served to strengthen industry in the North via a programmatic effort to forestall southern emigration. Between 1951 and 1971 an estimated 3,500,000 southerners emigrated to northern Italy and abroad. Approximately seventy-five percent of this total occurred between 1955 and 1965, the peak years of the Italian economic miracle. Emigration to the North of Italy accounted for eighty percent of this total, with Turin, Milan, and Rome being the leading recipients.²⁷ From 1951 to 1956 alone, the metropolitan population of Milan grew by 1,500,000 while that of Turin increased by 570,000. In-migration (versus natural increase) accounted for seventy percent of this growth in Milan and eighty-eight percent in Turin.²⁸ Numerous sociocultural components influenced the mass movement from the

South to the North, but economic push-and-pull factors were the most powerful causes. The unprecedented growth in northern industry in the 1950s and early 1960s coupled with substantially higher rates of unemployment and underemployment in the South, encouraged millions of southern workers to seek better fortunes. As State attempts to modernize agriculture and land tenure in the Mezzogiorno diminished under Phase II of the Cassa, the agricultural sector shed nearly two million workers. The percent of the active population of the South employed in agriculture dropped from 57% (3,800,000) in 1951 to 29% (1,800,000) in 1971.²⁹ Guido Cella has noted that two-thirds of migrants did so in stages, moving first from rural areas to southern cities and then on to the northern regions.³⁰ This analysis reflects the inability of southern urban centers to absorb the substantial number of workers released from the agricultural sector, as well as the incapacity of the southern industrial and tertiary sectors to incorporate excess labor in meaningful numbers.

Although it may seem paradoxical given the crucial role that southern migrant labor played in the growth of northern industry and the theoretical relationship between profit maximization and surplus labor, the State's industrial emphasis during Phase II was in large part designed to keep southern laborers in the South. Politically, the economic advantages of a labor increase in the North were outweighed by the need to curb expansion of labor union membership there that constituted an essential support base for the Communist (PCI) and Socialist (PSI) parties. Socially, the sheer number of emigrants to northern cities in such a short time made it impossible to expand urban infrastructure at a sufficient rate to accommodate them. *Borgate* (slums) and *coree* that emerged in the urban peripheries of Turin, Genoa, Milan, and Rome complicated municipal and federal expansion projects and brought issues of social welfare and equitable rights to the forefront. The regional and provincial orientation of the *borgate* and *coree*

fueled antagonisms between the settlements over employment and basic resources, while their spatial concentration made it easier for native northerners to differentiate themselves from the invading *terroni*.³¹ Through the facilitation of industrial employment opportunities in the South, the State attempted to alleviate the social and political pressures materializing in the North as a function of the second “great wave” of Italian emigration.

By all accounts, the attempt to slow emigration from the South through industrialization failed miserably. Between 1951 and 1971, industrial employment in the South increased only 200,000. During the same period, seventeen of the thirty-four provinces in the Mezzogiorno experienced net *decreases* of a thousand workers or more in manufacturing employment, evidence of Rodgers’ assessment that “the growth of new factories in southern Italy was paralleled by a major decline of traditional small workshops (40,000 establishments with less than six employees closed between 1951 and 1971).”³² Critics of the Cassa’s heavy-handed focus on large-scale industry contended that the program’s efforts resulted in little more than the creation of *cattedrali nel deserto* (cathedrals in the desert)—monolithic, capital-intensive factories built in isolation that provided little employment of unskilled, southern labor and a miniscule amount of external development. Jon Cohen and Giovanni Federico are particularly harsh in their overall assessment, suggesting that “instead of promoting social and economic change, the huge inflow of funds to the South merely led to the creation of a new political caste, the state bourgeoisie, and a new set of client-patron relations.”³³ Although many critics have cited the State’s infrastructural investments in the South as misguided, some concession is granted to the tangible degree of quality-of-life improvements fostered by the public-works projects of the Cassa. Ironically, the expansion and modernization of *autostrade* and rail lines throughout the Mezzogiorno expedited migration from the South to the North. This was

particularly true in the 1960s as transportation networks were connected for the first time to numerous rural, mountainous, and hinterland areas.

The social costs of emigration were in many ways immeasurable for the South. Out-migration between 1951 and 1971 amounted to a net loss of eighteen percent of the region's population, with the majority being males under the age of twenty-four.³⁴ This exodus by the most productive segment of the labor force had a substantial effect on families. As Rodgers has described, this left behind a "feminine and senile population," particularly in rural areas.³⁵ With the loss of the highest-earning members of their households, women and children were forced to work in greater numbers, often for less pay. This created considerable stress in terms of child health and education and the provision of basic goods and services. Along with the economic strain came psychological stress. Land redistribution policies under the Cassa and the *Enti di Riforma* followed a "dispersed settlement" model whereby families were relocated from concentrated villages to individual homesteads often several kilometers apart. The isolation that resulted was disintegrative, as the increased distance from extended family members, neighbors, nonagricultural employment, and essential services harmed established social and economic networks.

For the emigrants themselves, dreams that the North offered of full-time employment, social mobility, and *la dolce vita* often faded into feelings of estrangement, anxiety, and disillusionment. Living conditions in the *borgate* were often appalling, lacking potable water, sanitation, and heating. The absence of female family members who had provided cooking and cleaning services required male migrants to make disorienting and emasculating adjustments. Migrants from the agricultural sector also realized that they lacked requisite skills for industrial employment. Unemployment estimates for the migrant population in the North between 1955

and 1968 reached as high as twenty percent, far exceeding average rates for the Mezzogiorno during this period.³⁶ Pressure to provide remittances to their families back home pushed many unemployed migrants into illicit activities such as theft, robbery, and black-market trafficking. Culturally, assimilation into northern life was hindered by differences in dialects and social customs that fueled the marginalization of southerners. The individualistic and hedonistic attributes of northern cosmopolitan life contrasted greatly with the parochialism associated with southern culture. For migrants who did reap some success, their acceptance of bourgeois values, no matter how small, separated them from their roles within the traditional family and deterred their return to the Mezzogiorno.

The effects of the “hemorrhaging of the South”—a commonplace metaphor used to describe this second “great wave” of Italian emigration—became central themes in films and other cultural productions throughout the 1950s and 1960s.³⁷ The word “hemorrhaging” implies flow, loss, diffusion, and an inability to contain, all facets of southern emigration. The word also is expressive of broader socioeconomic changes that occurred throughout the country during the economic miracle. The success of industrialization required the “bleeding out” of the agricultural labor force. Modernization, particularly in the North, fostered the emergence of cosmopolitanism and consumerism that necessitated the abandonment of traditional modes of living and values. Losses in the process were both real and symbolic; real, in the disintegration of the traditional, extended family, and symbolic, in the exclusion of those southerners left behind from new definitions of national identity. The unfettered movement of people provided by infrastructural improvement and expansion fostered a rise in individualism (via the explosive growth in automobile use) and facilitated the diffusion of commodities and bourgeois culture. The ramifications of mobility (and immobility) related to emigration, embourgeoisement,

consumption, and cultural change were definitive issues examined by Italian cinema during the economic miracle.

Cinema's "Decisive Decade"³⁸

The level of economic, social, and cultural transformation occurring throughout Italy in the late 1950s and 1960s was mirrored in scope by the expansion and transfiguration of the film industry. Cinema developed as the primary medium in which ideological assessments of the nation's modernization were constructed and deconstructed. For the South, the growth of the "cinematic machine" led to greater incorporation of, and emphasis on, southerners in the process of cultural consumption. An increase in theatres and audience attendance between 1958 and 1968 encouraged filmmakers to target the depths of the Italian film industry to an unprecedented degree. The development of numerous popular genres aimed specifically at emerging southern audiences was matched by a renewed interest in treatments of the South itself. Overwhelmingly, depictions of the South stressed the region's relationship to a newly modern nation: a backward South versus a progressive North. However, the positions in which this dualism was contemplated varied greatly.

John Dickie has summarized the historical, top-down, vantage point as one where:

The South has been made into theatre for "the shock of diversity," whether provoking moral indignation in the spectator or a fascination for the picturesque. . . .Journeys to the South have been woven into the mythos of the foundation and crisis of the nation. . . .From street-corner prejudices to journalistic and academic discourse, the very diverse and changing problems within the South, such as those related to underdevelopment and organized crime, have too often been thought of as the problem of the Otherness of the South, seen as an unchanging whole without differences.³⁹

In contrast, views from the bottom-up often heralded the internal logic of southern social organization and the cultural heterogeneity of the Mezzogiorno. By challenging the notion of

national identity based on western bourgeois values, contestatory filmmakers highlighted the unevenness of Italy's modernization project and the fallacies of a homogeneous Italian culture. Portrayals of the complexity of southern incorporation during the economic miracle were nonetheless hampered by the difficulty of presenting experiences of the South as different from the North without reproducing the southerner as Other. Cinema during this time was self-reflexive and political, playing a central role in the dissemination of contrasting definitions of Italian nationalism.

Italian cinema's level of engagement with contemporary sociocultural issues peaked during this "golden age." Its self-reflexivity was fostered in large part by a simultaneous decline of American films in the domestic market. Italian film consumption always has been characterized by cycles of American domination. Identification of these peaks (1915-1923, 1943-1957, and 1976 to the present) and troughs (prior to World War I, the *ventennio nero*, and the late 1950s to mid-1970s) is important since it helps to differentiate periods in which "the public has for the most part been consuming the popular culture of another nation" from those where production and consumption were primarily internal.⁴⁰ Between 1958 and 1976, Italian production averaged over two hundred films per year. In this same period, American films distributed in Italy dropped from 233 in 1958 to a low of 127 in 1967, with an annual average for the eighteen years of 160.⁴¹ Shares of box-office receipts are more revealing. Between 1963 and 1976, Italian films garnered over fifty percent of total earnings, reaching a high of 62.5% in 1972, while American-film shares sunk to a low of 15.1% in that same year.⁴²

Production and earnings numbers are instructive, but they alone do not explain either the exceptional growth of the Italian film industry during this period or its Italo-centric focus. Oddly, part of the answer lies with efforts of the Catholic Church. Throughout the 1950s, the Catholic

Church built over five thousand parish theatres, primarily in southern rural areas.⁴³ These *seconda* and *terza visione* soon outgrew the *prima visione* in number. Geared towards working-class audiences, they featured second- and third-run, genre and foreign films offered at as low as one-third the ticket price of the *prima visione*. In contrast, the *prima visione*, located exclusively in urban centers, showcased foreign and domestic blockbusters and art films catered to an educated, middle- and upper-class audience. By 1958, box-office returns from rural and provincial theatres nearly equaled earnings from urban counterparts.⁴⁴ The creation of the thousands of *seconda* and *terza visione* incorporated a substantial portion of the population previously excluded from the movie-going experience and helped propel Italy into the largest film market in Europe.

The success of the *terza visione*, in particular, inspired the development of numerous genres during the period. The formulaic aspects of genre filmmaking made *filoni* (formula films) enticing to production companies since sets, screenwriters, actors, props, and costumes could be utilized in an assembly-line manner. This reduced both costs and allowed production of many more films per year. In this way, a cycle was established with the robust growth of the Italian film industry dependent on southern, rural audiences who paid to see genre films in much greater numbers than audiences in the North. Although genre has always been integral to the Italian film industry, it was only during this decade that audiences witnessed the explosion of so many different types simultaneously.

Among the *filoni* genres, the peplum (historical/mythical) and the spaghetti western were the most successful domestically and internationally. Other *filoni* included *cappa e spada* (cloak and dagger), spy (à la James Bond), crime-thrillers, erotic or “sexy,” and *strappalacrime* (tear-jerker). Peplum and western films were particularly popular in the South whereas erotic and spy

genres did well in the North. In one sense, this can be interpreted as a measure of acculturation differences between the North and South as a function of uneven development. In another, the correlations between films set in distant, frontier lands (and their appeal in the South) versus those set in urban environments (and their success in the North) are more obvious. What is clear is that the emergence of a truly popular cinema—in that all classes and regions were granted access to the cinematic experience—positioned film as the central communicative device in the contestations over Italian unity and identity.

Two genres played the most pivotal roles in challenging the hegemony of the economic miracle: the *commedia all'italiana* (Italian-style comedy) and the interrogative or “film inquest.” Their contributions to sociocultural and political debate hinged on their ability to bridge the gap between northern and southern audiences. In turn, this depended on specific screenwriters, directors, and actors who were able to meld popular subjects with innovative technical artistry.

The “decisive decade” for cinema produced record highs in theatre creation and attendance, Italian production and international distribution, and profits. Between 1958 and 1968, public expenditure on cinema exceeded all other leisure pursuits (theatre, opera, radio, television, periodicals, and sports) combined.⁴⁵ In this small temporal window prior to the full-scale saturation of television, the coincidence of American weakness and Italian rejuvenation placed cinema at the forefront of national cultural production and consumption. It could even be argued that to some degree Italian national unity was achieved—in the collective experience happening all over the country, in front of the screen with the lights down low.

Chapter 4

To Laugh or Cry?: *Commedia all'italiana* and the Critique of Cultural Change

*Take care, these Italians, full of failings are neither you nor me; they are your neighbors, the ones you meet on the staircase and whom you do not like to greet.*¹

Alberto Sordi

Comedy, it is said, has served as the “backbone” of the Italian film industry since the inception of the medium.² Economically, comedic films helped sustain the industry during low cycles, including the transition from silent to “talkies” during Fascism and the financial crisis of the late 1970s and 1980s. Comedies also drove film production during high cycles such as the late 1950s and early 1960s, garnering unprecedented box-office returns domestically and internationally that, in turn, provided for an expansion of the industry as a whole. Culturally, caricature, parody, and satire have consistently been important self-reflexive devices used to address dominant modes of social organization, morality, and behavior associated with specific historical periods. From silent-era slapstick, Fascist *telefono bianco*, *commedia brillante*, *commedia sentimentale*, and pink neorealism through *commedia all'italiana* and *commedia romantica* to postmodern pastiche and mockumentary, comedies exist as the most temporally specific cultural representations of transformative periods. Viewed collectively, the comedy genre provides an historical timeline of the most significant sociocultural changes occurring throughout various stages of Italy’s modernization.

The popularity of the comedic form is related to the adage that “nothing is off-limits in comedy,” including religion, morality, ethnicity, and sexuality. Aspects of ideology and identity ordinarily avoided in everyday discourse are the central subjects of comedy. As a consequence, the comedic framework serves a vital communicative function by exposing characteristics of private space to the public forum.

In a Freudian sense, laughter is often the physical response to feelings of discomfort, anxiety, and guilt elicited by a viewer's identification with the protagonist on screen. This is typical of the *commedia brillante* of the late 1920s and early 1930s. In this style, a "series of errors is compounded until a tangled knot is tied," underlined all the while by tension surrounding the inevitable exposure of the actions by the protagonist.³ In the *commedia sentimentale* of the 1930s and early 1940s, fear of exposure is balanced by pleasure generated via the progressive dissociation with the protagonist. As the knot is slowly untied, the protagonist resorts to increasingly despicable (and absurd) means to prevent his or her disclosure. Pleasure is derived from the moment of exposure itself, achieved only after the protagonist has traveled beyond the boundaries of ordinary behavior.

The process of moving from identification to distance alludes to another aspect of the affective and popular nature of comedy. Implied by Sordi's comment above, comedy allows one's own defects and vices to be deferred to the exaggerated "everyman" on screen and thereby projected onto prevailing stereotypes. Although we may recognize our own character flaws depicted by the actors, the farcical, out-of-the-ordinary circumstances that define comedic narratives encourage the deflection of judgment away from ourselves and onto an amorphous Other.

Sordi's tongue-in-cheek remark also speaks of the "double bind" of comedy, in that we are all someone else's "neighbor." The challenge faced by directors bent on transcending the inherently escapist tendencies of the genre revolves around their ability to critique prevalent belief systems and modes of behavior without simply reifying dualistic categorizations of identity. Although the advantage of the comedic form is its freedom to dissect the most personal aspects of identity, its greatest disadvantage lies in the common viewer perception of its lack of

seriousness and realism. In Nanni Moretti's film *Ecce bomba* (Behold the Bomb, 1978), the director alludes to this conundrum in his critique of the cultural impact of Italian film comedy. As an audience watches the film *Il Moralista* (The Moralist, 1959) a young man stands up and yells, "it serves you right, Alberto Sordi!", thus accusing the star and Italian comedy in general of benumbing the minds of citizens and discouraging critical analysis of ongoing social and political struggles. Noteworthy is Moretti's awareness, indicated by this scene, of the paradox surrounding the traditional leftist critique of comedy as apolitical. The fact that the left, and in particular the Italian Communist Party (PCI) throughout the 1950s and 1960s, publicly chastised comedies as "pulp distractions," backhandedly acknowledges the importance of this cinema to cultural and political debates. It also indicts these films as part and parcel to the diversionary tactics of the political right, affirming the leftist conception that popular culture serves the interests of capitalist consumption as well as the hegemony of the ruling Christian Democratic Party (DC).

The minimization of film comedy's relevance is also contradicted by frequent public responses from the right. In contrast to the theoretical criticism of the left, rightist disdain throughout the 1950s and 1960s was largely based on literal readings of such films. Recurrent representations therein of immorality, deceit, vanity, prejudice, and backwardness amongst ordinary Italians ran counter to the projections of civility, sophistication, and bourgeois morality being heralded by the DC. The party went so far as to threaten censorship and denial of distribution rights to films that "grossly exaggerated and misrepresented the conduct and beliefs" of the Italian populace and the State.⁴ It is not surprising that the films provoking the most direct admonishment from the right were those with the greatest domestic appeal and international reach. During the period of the economic miracle, these films were predominantly of the

commedia all'italiana variety and included Pietro Germi's *Un maledetto imbroglio* (The Facts of Murder, 1959), *Divorzio all'italiana* (Divorce, Italian-Style, 1961), and *Sedotta e abbandonata* (Seduced and Abandoned, 1964), Dino Risi's *Il sorpasso* (The Easy Life, 1962) and *I Mostri* (The Monsters, 1963), and Alberto Lattuada's *Mafioso* (Mafioso, 1962).⁵

The contempt for comedy exhibited by both the left and right conflicted with the overwhelming appeal of the genre, particularly in the South, during the 1950s and 1960s. Counter to political claims of distraction or perversion, such popularity suggests an engagement and identification amongst the masses with their central sociocultural concerns. As a result, an analysis of the *intent* of the commentary contained within film parody, satire, and caricature is crucial to understanding the popular *reception* thereof. The success of the *commedia all'italiana* in particular illustrates how comedy, in communicative function and cultural translation, is incorporated into real battles over identity, inclusion, and the representation of the modern nation. The elucidation of recurrent themes in the *commedia all'italiana* enables one to locate the sites of cultural struggle instigated by the societal transformations of the economic miracle and to identify the subversive qualities that render comedy political.

***Commedia all'italiana* and the Crisis of Representation**

Commedia all'italiana is a term retroactively coined by critics to describe a form of film comedy that emerged in the mid-1950s. Albeit generic in its descriptiveness, the label nonetheless alludes to the uniqueness and international success of the genre. It is a classification that attempts to differentiate films of this type from other domestic and international comedies via their consistencies in formal, narrative structure and thematic focus on the critique of societal customs, beliefs, and behavior specific to Italy. Although the term is derived from Germi's

Divorzio all'italiana released in 1961, Mario Monicelli's film, *I soliti ignoti* (Big Deal on Madonna Street, 1958), is generally accepted as the first in the genre.⁶ Based on the identification of this starting point, the evolution of the form can, in retrospect, be delineated into three periods: the "boom years" (1958-1964), the "downturn" (1964-1971), and the "last gasp" (1971-1980).

The focus of this chapter is the "boom years." This is not simply because of the overlapping of this phase with the peak years of the economic miracle. It is also a function of this period containing the greatest number of *commedie all'italiana* which, in total, earned more domestic and international box-office returns and awards than those of both subsequent stages. During this initial period, the genre reinforced the centrality of the star system to the success of the industry. Through recurrent use of Sordi, Vittorio Gassman, Nino Manfredi, Ugo Tognazzi, Stefania Sandrelli, Marcello Mastroianni, and Totò, directors capitalized on the incomparable appeal of established stars. The public's attribution of specific personality traits to each actor allowed directors the freedom to both reaffirm and deconstruct audience expectations. The immense public engagement with this genre characterized by a "dark, bittersweet, and fatalistic tone of self-criticism" makes its understanding that much more intriguing. At the same time it affirms the genre's impress on ideological representations of Italianness and the nation.⁷

Films of the *commedia all'italiana* variety are united in the most basic sense by their sharp, even virulent social criticism. There is a constant balancing act between laughter and desperation, affirmation and denigration. In tone, the films are related to the tragicomic tradition in their cynical humor and often ambivalent and ironic conclusions. Plot lines and character sketches are heavily indebted to the *commedia dell'arte*, an improvisational theatre tradition popular from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries that satirized local scandals, current events,

and regional tastes by way of the construction and interplay of exaggerated stereotypes. The critique of regional social customs and behavioral traits in both forms is done in a self-effacing and deflective manner—there is no perfect person against which all others are measured. Instead, a juxtaposition of character flaws is presented. The effect is that the audience's acceptance of the sensationalized faults of one character depends on their simultaneous admission of the shortcomings of the character's opposite. Only in this way are they to avoid hypocrisy and discrimination.

The principal characters of the *commedia all'italiana* exhibit singular or multiple Italian defects that are frequently contradictory. Among the most prevalent are a fawning respect for authority/cynicism towards government, vilification of subordinates, sexual repression/obsession, intellectual shallowness/anti-intellectualism, vanity, laziness, superficiality, archaic morality/immorality, and deceitfulness. The critique of these flaws in the *commedia all'italiana* transcends all class, ethnic, and regional boundaries. In so doing, the filmmakers allude to a crisis of identity affecting the entire populace during the economic miracle, laying bare an undercurrent of social malaise and the painful contradictions of a culture in rapid transition.

Obsession with the effects of economic growth on society and culture differentiates *commedia all'italiana* from other comedic forms. According to Ernesto G. Laura, “it is not only a question of a well-defined Italian landscape or of language or even of dialects, but of an intimate relationship with the customs, events, periods, and problems of contemporary Italy” that distinguishes the genre.⁸ In their sardonic critiques, these films provide counterarguments against the supposedly positive effects of modernization. Rhetorical claims of progress attributed to increased wealth, consumption, and mobility are mediated by an emphasis on the real

consequences of the loss of traditional values, the demise of the agricultural and provincial base, the emergence of a new, urban middle-class, the dehumanizing effects of consumer culture, the solitude of the individual, and the fracturing of the family. A strong vein of moralism accompanies the debunking of progressive idealism. This enlivens the self-reflexive irony of the films given their penchant for displaying the grotesque immorality of ordinary Italians. In this sense, the categorization of the genre as “neorealism at a comic angle—turned on end and parodying itself” is understandable.⁹ In contrast to neorealism, *commedia all’italiana* favors pessimism and ambiguity over humanistic optimism. It is more a commentary on “what we are becoming” than “what we can be.” The promise offered by the literal and figurative leveling of class difference in the immediate postwar period is replaced by the reality of degenerative results that accompanied consumer culture during the economic miracle.

Attempts to portray the economic and social unevenness of Italy’s rapid modernization predominantly revolved around the reorientation and reconstruction of the South as archaic, underdeveloped, and foreign. As Angelo Restivo has suggested:

The South becomes the ideal site in which to explore the changing manners and mores of a new society; for the South, in its very “backwardness,” its cultural distance from modernity, provides the widest possible distance requisite for the effects of comedy. . . . In this way, the South becomes for the nation a site of displacement, the place upon which its own anxieties about the transformations wrought by modernization can be displaced.¹⁰

Changes in social structure, behavior, values, and mores attributable to the emergence of modern, capitalist culture are analyzed via their contraposition to the stasis ascribed to the South. Given that the economic growth of the nation was directed by the industrial expansion of northern urban centers, the process of sociocultural transformation itself is equated with the North. Progress is seen as occurring from top to bottom, in both a class-based and geographically imagined sense. Judgments concerning its social effects at the regional and national levels are

therefore grounded in the real and metaphorical distance between the North and the “historically frozen” South. The extent to which changes in sexuality, morality, consumption, and civility are deemed acceptable is measured in their relation to a southern society rendered as antiquated, immobile, and absurd.

Herein lies the problem of *commedia all’italiana*. The satirical juxtaposition of a modern North with a backward South is intended to unrobe distortions of progress and equality accredited to the economic miracle. On the one hand, the films do present evidence of the dangerous and disintegrative contradictions of modernization. However, this recognition is necessitated by what André Bazin has called, a “deep” reading of the films; one that requires the viewer to analyze beyond the filmic boundaries of time, action, and setting.¹¹ A “deep” reading of *commedia all’italiana* in particular, involves Hegelian dialectical thinking, in that the mutual contradiction of two opposites (thesis/antithesis) needs to be replaced by the higher level of truth of a third proposition (synthesis). In contrast, a superficial reading of the films may entrench stereotypes of the South. Given the general absence within the *commedia all’italiana* of redemptive qualities (on the part of the individual) and resolutions for regional incorporation, these films run the risk of merely reiterating the Otherness of the Mezzogiorno.

This problem centers on the audience’s freedom to decode the message subjectively. Decoding, according to Stuart Hall, occurs from three hypothetical positions: the dominant-hegemonic, the negotiated, and the oppositional.¹² Rather than being static, these positions exist in a continuum, allowing movement between the divisions in response to alterations in the “preferred meanings” of cultural texts and changes in class allegiance. For Hall, these positions are not “personal (mis)readings of isolated viewers.” Instead, they are “ideological positions concerning particular social groups.”¹³ Hall, however, asserted that these groups cannot be

reduced to class alone; no guarantee exists that a working-class audience, for instance, will produce oppositional readings to projections of bourgeois conspicuous consumption or bureaucratic corruption. Although acceptance of the multivarious nature of decoding may appear to diminish the ability to make concrete conclusions about the public's reception of the *commedia all'italiana*, the general opposition of the political left *and* right to the messages communicated by the genre suggests a discernable effect on ideological imaginations of the modern nation.

The message of the South as a site of displacement is integrated into the construction of the nation during the economic miracle in two crucial ways. First, it implies the need to conceive the South as a postcolonial space within the nation itself—a region dependent upon northern socioeconomic guidance yet ultimately responsible for its own development. Second, it requires regional divisions to be taken into account in advance of claims for national unity. Southern culture needs to be included rather than assimilated in national identity. The difficulty lies in reconciling the creation of symbolic opposition between the North and South with the myths of homogenization and equity ascribed to economic growth. According to Restivo, this is predominantly a function of the timing and rapidity of Italy's modernization, in that:

The construction of Italy as a coherent national entity occurs *not* under the discourses of modernity in which the other great Western nations were constructed but rather within the tensions between that modernist, democratic impulse and an incipient postmodernity that would valorize (for the purposes of consumption, of course) the very dispersion that renders the idea of the nation already an antiquated one.¹⁴

The predicament underlying the construction of national unity is not simply a matter of rectifying the dualism of premodern and modern. It demands finding a negotiated position between premodern and modern that is conscious of emerging *postmodern* factors (e.g. globalization; post-Fordist capitalism) that diminish the importance of fostering national unity at all.

As a consequence, a negotiated reading of *commedia all'italiana* films that both adopts and opposes the veracity of the genre's prevailing binarisms of modernity/antiquity, individual/society, mobility/immobility, and traditional versus nuclear family is most informative. The contradictory aspect of the negotiated position mirrors the internal conflict of the hegemonic construction of the nation-state during this transformative period. It also encourages a deconstruction of the relative nature of comedy itself, for what is laughable for one is reason to cry for another.

From Modernity to Antiquity: *Mafioso*

No other film of the *commedia all'italiana* genre tackles the dichotomies between the North and South better than Lattuada's *Mafioso*. This film focuses on the clash between modern, northern customs and "an archaic southern code of conduct that persists in an era of transformation."¹⁵ In tone, it is critical of the treatment and exploitation of the South, yet it "reveals the difficulty of portraying the complexity of the 'Southern Question' without falling into the position of reproducing the southerner as Other."¹⁶ In general, the film is a tragicomedic ethnography of Sicily, constructed through the dual lens of a returning native and his outsider wife. What Lattuada offers specifically is a contrast of the very different social orders of three forms of family: the traditional/extended, the nuclear, and the *mafia*. This is developed within the broader iconic comparison of the physical and cultural landscapes of Milan and Sicily.

The protagonist of *Mafioso* is Antonio Badalamente (played by Sordi), a Sicilian who has emigrated to Milan and worked his way up the ladder at an automobile manufacturing plant. He is a chronometrist—an efficiency expert who obsessively times the repetitive motions of the machinists whom he supervises [Fig. 4.1]. The film opens with long-shots of the orderly and



Figure 4.1. *Mafioso*, 1962. Time is money in the industrial North.

massive Fordist factory, highlighting the bureaucratic, hierarchical, and alienating aspects of modern industrial work. The camera follows Antonio on the last day before his vacation. He has decided to take his wife, Marta, and two daughters, Caterina and Cynthia, to his hometown of Calamo, Sicily, for the first time. The city blocks he traverses on his way home are bustling and crowded—a chaotic Milan is presented in high velocity, replete with imposing buildings, modern tenements, shops, and thousands of people and automobiles all in motion. When he arrives home, the viewer is instantly made aware of the outsider role Marta will play. She and the couple's young daughters all are fair-skinned and blond. They are identifiably nonsouthern in their appearance, dialect, and mannerisms. Marta's unease concerning the trip indicates her fear of meeting Antonio's family and of traveling outside of "the civilized world."

Time is emphasized again in the family's journey South. Traveling sequences, in their length, suggest slowness and distance. Images of the southern landscape from train, boat, and car are picaresque and exotic, accentuating the vast emptiness and quiet of the Mezzogiorno. When their ship begins to cross the Strait of Messina, the camera pans with Antonio as he points across the water and eagerly says, "There's Sicily." Marta, looking in the opposite direction, comments sadly on Italy "slipping away," which prompts an exasperated Antonio to ask, "Isn't this Italy too?" As they begin the long drive to the western coast of the island, Marta's discomfort is compounded. Surveying the desolate landscape from the car, she laments that "It's obvious we have left Italy behind." Her disdain is countered by Antonio's exuberance in extolling the simple and carefree life of Sicily. When they pass a funeral where mourners are eating and drinking next to the corpse, Antonio lauds the peaceful sincerity of Sicilian ways. However, upon asking about the cause of death, he is nonchalantly told it was from "two pistol shots." The indifferent

response to murder presages Antonio's own response to his brutal actions to come, and associates violence as a fact of everyday life in the South.

Marta's culture shock is exacerbated at the eventual meeting with Antonio's family. They are greeted by dozens of family members waiting eagerly in front of the house. The camera scrolls over each person, encouraging the viewer to take measure of the familiar archetypal images of southerners. Numerous older women are present, dressed in black and wearing headscarves, together with burly, scruffy uncles and neighbors, half-dressed children, and Antonio's sister, Rosalia, a dark-haired young woman with a discernable mustache. (Comically, it is Rosalia's facial hair that initiates Marta's opening up to the family later in the film.) The sheer expanse of the traditional, extended family is parodied in Antonio and Marta's movement through the procession. Antonio greets his uncle and rhetorically asks, "You're still alive?" before staring bewilderingly at his sister's mustache. He hugs the first older woman he sees and exclaims, "Mama!," only to be brushed aside by the lady who turns out to be his aunt. The same occurs with the second woman (also his aunt) before he finally embraces his actual mother. The absurdity extends into the crowded house where twelve people spanning four generations live. As guests, Antonio and Marta are given the best bed, leaving Antonio's mother and father to sleep on the floor.

Marta's presence, met with suspicion and silence, is immediately contrasted with the image of southern femininity. Her revealing attire renders her out of place and warrants lurid glances from the older women and ogles from the men. The women are also astounded by her bourgeois behavior, indicated by her reluctance to eat the rustic food they have prepared and her gall in lighting a cigarette at the table in front of men. Marta's vanity is emphasized by her disgust for the squalid living conditions and lack of amenities in Sicily, as well as the subservient

position of women in the Sicilian family. She cannot comprehend why the young girls are kept cloistered away or why she is unable to be seen alone in public. Although Marta's liberated position in line with northern cosmopolitanism is used to satirize antiquated gender roles of the South, Lattuada is careful not to affirm her freedom as entirely better. He shows Marta's individualism as alienating via her self-centeredness, denigration of her husband, and indifference towards her children. This contrasts with the closeness and solidarity of the traditional family. Although Lattuada suggests the need for a compromise in family structure given that each version contains distinct disadvantages, he ultimately leaves judgment to the viewer.

The theme of family is compounded by the introduction of the *mafia* midway through the film. Antonio is told to pay a visit to the town patron, Don Vincenzo, who not coincidentally is head of the local *mafia*. That the don is waited on by a senator, a priest, and a band of criminal associates indicates his position at the top of the social ladder. It also suggests that the *mafia* in general still runs things in the South and that patronage is rampant, regardless of the amount of State intervention. Although Antonio thinks he is merely paying his respects to Don Vincenzo, he soon learns that the boss has a job for him [Fig. 4.2]. What the audience learns prior to Antonio's arrival is that his success in Milan had been due entirely to the don's influence. As a consequence, the heretofore unknown favor requires a substantial repayment on Antonio's part. Antonio's "gratitude" is to be paid by killing a man in New York who has betrayed the "family."

Through the character of the don, Lattuada alludes to the persistence of the historical alliance between southern landowners (who, in Sicily, were predominantly mafiosi) and northern industrialists, a partnership maligned by Antonio Gramsci as a primary hindrance to proletarian emancipation and national unification. Equally important is the suggestion that one cannot



Figure 4.2. *Mafioso*, 1962. Escaping one's "obligations" to the South is easier said than done.

escape the social codes of the South simply by emigrating from it. Although Antonio is one of the few successes of southern migrants in the North, he cannot separate himself from the obligations that still define the social structure of the South. His predicament parallels the inability of the North to simply divorce itself (in terms of national unity) from the dependency and difference of the South. Antonio's agreement to commit the murder acknowledges his commitment to upholding codes of southern political culture over his moral responsibility to both of his other families.

Cleverly, the film expands on the basic allusion to allegiance, individualism, and the Southern Question in a sequence showing an inversion of such traits. At the beach, Antonio and his friends critically discuss the isolated position of southerners:

Man #1: But if alienation is an industrialization problem, doesn't that mean we are all alienated? What are we otherwise, happy and content?

Man #2: The South's sickness isn't psychological. It's due to economy and society.

Man #3: You're wrong. We are psychologically isolated.

Man #4: People don't communicate. That's another issue.

Man #1: They're two sides of the same coin. Sure we don't communicate. Among friends we do. We know all about each other. But with the ladies, we never communicate. Hence, alienated.

The focus of the conversation abruptly devolves to an argument over the "northernness" of a naked figure of a woman the men are building in the sand. In this scene, the film transposes the existential crisis of the individual espoused in art films of the time onto the Sicilians. Ultimately, the unexpected intellectualism of the men is rendered an aberration of southern existence by an exposition of juvenile sexual attitudes. When Antonio joins the group, the men press him about his sexual conquests in Milan. As Antonio begins to recount his experiences, he notices that the men are no longer listening to him. Instead, they are gazing at Marta in her bikini. Annoyed,

Antonio exclaims, “That’s my wife!” and warns the men, “Watch it. I may live in Milan, but I’m still Sicilian!” He then hurriedly walks over to Marta, covers her up, and leaves the beach. The moment reiterates not only how southern “masculine honor is tied to the female body as male property,” but also the depth of Antonio’s self-identification as a southerner despite the prosperity and freedom he has acquired in the North.¹⁷

Under the guise of a weekend hunting trip, Antonio is escorted to New York where he proceeds to follow through with his duties. He returns to Sicily and then to Milan with his wife and daughters as if nothing happened. The film ends with Antonio back at work in the factory. Repeating the opening sequence, Antonio again compulsively times the movements of the workers. However, this time the camera pans out to a depth greater than in the beginning scene. The increased distance between the camera and Antonio suggests a new level of alienation. His heinous act has distanced himself further from moral obligations to family. At the same time, the experience has made him aware of his inability to escape the past. No matter how much his life has changed in Milan, he cannot untie the knots that continue to bind the antiquated customs of the South to conceptions of northern progress.

Mafioso shrewdly locates the profound cultural differences between the two regions within a framework of interdependency. As Landy has adeptly summarized:

The film provides a broad vista on the “Southern Question” and attempts the impossible task of integrating the economic situation of Southern life with the vestigial remnants of familism, subordination of women to the codes of honor, the segregation of those who work against custom, and the role of the Mafia as integrally associated with landlordism, patronage, and violence. Moreover, the North is not exempted from this analysis, since the Mafia is part of northern industrial life.¹⁸

In *Mafioso*, Lattuada attempts to locate the debate over the “real” Italy squarely in the present, for much like Antonio’s need to reconcile his inbetweenness of place, the identity of the nation

as a whole must be negotiated between divergent spaces (the North and South) and times (the past and future). The South cannot simply be left to history, just as the North cannot be imagined exclusively as harbinger of the future.

Moral Distance: Pietro Germi's *Divorzio all'italiana* and *Sedotta e abbandonata*

The critique of an archaic and persistent code of southern morality is undertaken with greater depth and focus in Germi's films *Divorzio all'italiana* and *Sedotta e abbandonata*. The principal plot lines revolve around marital tension, sexual oppression, and divorce; however, Germi develops these themes in relation to broader, underlying characteristics of Sicilian society including *onore* (honor), *omertà* (code of silence), patriarchy, corruption, and violence. The narrative form of both films can be described as *reductio ad absurdum*—a sardonic portrayal of customs wherein “a social question is magnified, reducing the action to chaos and the social question to absurdity.”¹⁹ Through the unfathomable, illogical, and ridiculous actions of the characters on screen, Germi renders Sicilian culture as incongruous with emerging transformations in sexual morality, gender roles, and the family occurring throughout urban Italy. Although scrutiny of the embedded social customs and codes of the Mezzogiorno has historically occurred “without a shred of comedy,” what finally opens them to laughter and parody in the early 1960s is the discernable increase in distance between an immobile South and a rapidly modernizing North.²⁰ Rather than simply reaffirming the stereotypical backwardness of the region, the films incorporate the South into national dialogues concerning sexual liberation, women's rights, and gender equality by exploring these issues within the feudal symbolic order of the South.

Produced prior to the legalization of divorce, *Divorzio all'italiana* centers on one man's desire to free himself from his nagging, unaffectionate wife. The protagonist is Ferdinando "Fefé" Cefalù (Marcello Mastroianni), a decadently vain and listless Sicilian aristocrat who dreams of divorcing his wife Rosalia (Daniela Rocca) so that he can marry his teenage cousin Angela (Stefania Sandrelli). Being without legal option, Fefé attempts to drive his wife to commit adultery so that he can murder her. Per Silician custom, his act would be considered a "crime of honor" and thus met with lighter punishment. Having weighed his options of "three to seven years" incarceration versus a lifetime of marital imprisonment, Fefé concludes the former to be more tolerable.

The film follows Fefé's failed attempts to catch his wife in the act of betrayal. He has hired his wife's former lover, a painter named Carmelo, to restore a fresco in their house. After secretly placing a microphone in the room, Fefé continually devises ways to get Rosalia and Carmelo alone together. Fefé's time in the interim is spent longingly spying on his cousin, listening to his clandestine recordings, and loafing about the house in his robe. After several days, Carmelo and Rosalia have re-established their bond. But, just when Fefé thinks he has caught them professing love for each other, the tape runs out on the recorder.

Flustered, Fefé hatches a new plan. This time he encourages Carmelo to come to the house at night, when he and the rest of the family, except for Rosalia, are at a movie. He intends to leave the theatre midfilm so as to arrive home unexpectedly, grab a gun he has stashed, and shoot the lovers in the act. Upon reaching the house, however, he discovers the couple already gone, having boarded a train for an unknown location. Fefé spends the next few weeks taking internal delight in his stigmatized public identification as a cuckold, hoping that in time the townspeople will become sympathetic to his fate and thus offer no objection to the courting of

his cousin. Unfortunately, he still technically remains married, forcing him to locate his wife and complete the divorce, “Italian-style.” After tracking down the adulterous couple, Fefé readies himself, pistol in hand. But, as he climbs the cliff to where they sit, two shots ring out and a woman runs past him. To his horror, the woman is Carmelo’s wife, who has exacted her own revenge by killing her husband. In a grotesque yet comical conclusion, Fefé runs to the scene of the crime yelling, “What about my honor?” and proceeds to kill Rosalia [Fig. 4.3].

The final sequences detail Fefé’s conviction and sentencing. He receives the minimum of three years for the murder. The film then cuts to him returning on a train after being released. He is greeted at the station by a throng of family and friends, treated as a hero returning from war. In the last scene, Fefé is on a boat with Angela, his new bride, happily living his new life. However, as Fefé kisses her, the camera pans over Angela to show her simultaneously caressing the young boathand with her foot, suggestive of the recurrence of marital betrayal, this time surely unwanted.

In *Divorzio all’italiana*, Germi portrays persistent Sicilian codes of morality and honor as hypocritical and socially disintegrative. Although this portrait forces the audience into a viewpoint highly critical of Sicilian life, it provides a forum to analyze national-level debates over divorce and gender equality. This is done by framing southern culture as antithetical to modern rationalism, thereby offering the South as a measuring stick for progress. Sicilian society is envisioned as oppressive, insular, misogynist, and contradictory. Townspeople watch each other with suspicion from balconies, windows, and street corners, and obsess over other people’s private matters; men long to be lotharios yet ridicule their cuckolded friends; fathers subject their cloistered daughters to humiliating examinations to certify their purity; women accept the



Figure 4.3. *Divorzio all'italiana*, 1961. Fefé intends to save his honor by murdering his wife.

dominant sexist views of morality as their duty to tradition; and the courts uphold masculine honor over the sanctity of life.

Germi's disparaging depiction is not, however, intended simply to render the South as antiquated and hypocritical. It is also an indictment of the failure of the political left and right to confront social change. Following the screening of *La dolce vita* (The Sweet Life, 1960), where the entire audience watches the seductive gyrations of Anita Ekberg with astonishment, the town priest attributes Rosalia's adulterous behavior to the "sinful" and "illicit" example of liberated female sexuality in the film [Fig. 4.4]. He extols Christian democracy and family values and then calls for the wholesale rejection of cinema—of "shameless pictures, unworthy mystifications of art that flaunt and exalt sin, debauchery, and immorality." This is succeeded by a scene where a representative of the Communist Party speaks to a crowd of men. After mentioning how pleased he is to visit Sicily for the first time, the official orates about democracy and female emancipation, and how the Chinese provide an excellent example of how to accomplish both. When he asks the audience, "What is the calm, objective judgment that Mrs. Cefalù deserves?" the crowd yells "Whore!" in unison.

The left is ridiculed for its perceived avoidance of the region and its inability to understand the (Gramscian) "common sense" of the South. The Communist Party is presented as naïve, incapable of relating to southern parochialism and the resistance to social change that accompanies it. On the other hand, Germi's criticism of the right cleverly alludes to the DC's publicized disaffection for the *commedia all'italiana* and its unflattering presentation of Italians. In so doing, Germi highlights the irony of the priest's admonishment of cinema in general, considering that the Catholic Church, in cooperation with the DC, established thousands of parish theatres in the South during the 1950s. The film also exposes the illogical



Figure 4.4. *Divorzio all'italiana*, 1961. *La dolce vita* arrives in Sicily to mixed reviews.

“industrial puritanism” of the right—an ideological desire for transformative economic development devoid of changes in morality and social organization.²¹

Sedotta e abbandonata expands upon the critique of Sicilian social customs in a much darker and less comical fashion. Humor is less overt, generated primarily through the audience’s recognition of the absurdity and irrationality that accompanies the main characters’ steadfast adherence to family honor and codes of morality. *Sedotta e abbandonata* reiterates many of the stylistic caricatures of *Divorzio all’italiana*: Daughters are forced to undergo examinations to confirm their virginity; the objectification of women by men is contrasted with latent homoeroticism; male honor is bounded by clientelism and ritual; and individual freedom is contained by the oppressive voyeurism that subsumes the town. The film revolves around the Ascalone family, headed by the stern patriarch Vincenzo, who values honor and respect from his peers over the happiness of his daughters Agnese and Matilde. Contradictory and disintegrative elements of Sicilian social customs are highlighted, most explicitly through the transformation of Agnese. Matilde’s fiancé Peppino, in violation of codes prohibiting premarital sex, seduces Agnese and gets her pregnant. When their sin is uncovered, Peppino refuses to marry the young woman since she is no longer pure, defending his decision via the unwritten rules of Sicilian society that require brides to be virgins. Castigated by townspeople and beaten by her father, Agnese is made into a pariah. Ultimately, through the collusion of her family and the local police, Agnese is forced to do the honorable thing and marry Peppino. Before accepting her fate, however, she courageously breaks the code of *omertà* by publicly charging Peppino with seducing her, “thus bringing down upon her and her family (rather than upon Peppino) the disapproval of the entire neighborhood.”²²

Uncompromising obedience to codes of masculine honor and feminine purity is presented as cause of the splintering effects on the family. Agnese's sanity begins to slip away, her sister Matilde is placed in a convent to protect her virginity, their father indirectly dies from his insurmountable shame, and their mother is left heartbroken and alone. The message is that individual rebellion is useless within an inflexible moral code that actively resists change. Individualism, especially on the part of a woman, threatens the symbolic patriarchal order of the South as well as the traditional family, historically realized as the foundation of Italian culture.

In *Sedotta e abbandonata*, Germi reaffirms his portrayal of the South as immobile and poorly adaptive to the changes wrought by modernization. Importantly, his critique of the antiquated moral code is not intended to simply denigrate southern "backwardness." In both of these films, the director situates stereotypical depictions of Sicilian culture within the broader issue of how, if at all, the South can be incorporated or assimilated into constructions of the nation. Attempts to encourage social change through the passive extension of economic growth, infrastructural development, state bureaucracy, and political lip service are rendered ineffectual by their neglect of cultural specificity within the South. *Sedotta e abbandonata* summarizes the lack of realistic and empathetic proposals for modernizing the South. In a scene emblematic of this problem, an apathetic and irritable northern policeman stares dumbfoundedly at a map of Italy. He proceeds to cover Sicily with his hand, exclaiming, "That's better," with a sigh of relief before wondering aloud whether an atomic blast "would improve matters on the island" and rid Italy of its "ball and chain" [Fig. 4.5] The South is again depicted as outside of the nation—extracted further by its increasing moral distance from northern progressivism.



Figure 4.5. *Sedotta e abbandonata*, 1964. Erasing Sicily from Italy.

The View with the Top Down: *Il sorpasso*

Dino Risi's *Il sorpasso* explores the increasing distance between traditionalism and modernism from the opposite view of the aforementioned films. Focus is shifted from the antiquated symbolic order of Sicily to various signs and symbols of emerging consumer culture. The film is a veritable catalogue of the new Italian lifestyle, highlighted by "the hastened tempo of life, frenetic and alienated leisure activities, and attitudes towards Americanness, tradition versus modernity, work, technology, and sexuality."²³ Set in Lazio and Tuscany, *Il sorpasso* displaces to the North such familiar issues as southern backwardness, immobility, and resistance to change. This effectively relocates regional differences within a broader, national rural/urban dialectic. The term *il sorpasso* refers to the act of passing another car on the road, a process that occurs literally dozens of times in the film. Metaphorically, it is indicative of Risi's principal message of traditional culture left in the dust of history, overtaken by modern values.

Described as the Italian road movie *par excellence*, *Il sorpasso* revolves around an aimless drive by two strangers between Rome and Viareggio, a resort town in northern Tuscany. The action begins with the main character, Bruno (Vittorio Gassman), frantically searching the streets in the outskirts of Rome for a telephone. To his dismay, all the businesses are closed for the *ferragosto* vacation—the universal holiday taken on August fifteenth. By chance, a young man named Roberto (Jean-Louis Trintignant) sees Bruno out his window and offers him use of his phone. Before being interrupted, Roberto had been studying for his law exams. His disregard for the *ferragosto* holiday—a symbol of the national identification with leisure time during the economic boom years—immediately renders him out of sync with modern times.

The initial contrast between Bruno and Roberto serves as the catalyst for Risi's general comparisons between old and new. Bruno is an arrogant, superficial extrovert prone to

impulsiveness. Obsession with his car, the quintessential symbol of “Italy’s belated entry into a consumer society,” epitomizes his individualism and vanity.²⁴ His occupation is never made explicit. He lives by the *arte di arrangiarsi*, “a kind of improvisational way of getting by through a combination of bravado, seductiveness, and smarts.”²⁵ Roberto, on the other hand, is a conservative and pensive introvert bound by structure and discipline. After much prodding, Bruno convinces Roberto to take a break from his studies and go for a spin in his convertible. What begins as a short joyride, however, turns into an epic journey, with Bruno relentlessly attempting to teach Roberto about the obsolescence of the old values and ideals.

Throughout the drive, the film presents a litany of the images and sounds of mobile, consumerist Italy: Roads are lined with billboards and utility poles; restaurant menus feature “American hamburgers”; vending machines and scooters form rows in front of stores; teenagers wear surfer and beatnik attire; and a continuous loop of pop music plays everywhere. Importantly, all this is measured against a backdrop of traditional life that surfaces occasionally for shock value. At one point, the duo passes a man on a bicycle, prompting Bruno to yell, “Get a Vespa!” When they speed by a family of farmers piled into a jalopy loaded with possessions, Bruno sarcastically remarks, “Ah, those fine Italian families” [Fig. 4.6]. Later, they come upon a group of priests standing by their broken vehicle. The fact that the men are stranded suggests the inability of the Catholic Church to keep up with changes in morality wrought by consumer culture. Their arguing in Latin further situates the priests in the past. In a scene paradigmatic of the confluence of old and new, Bruno and Roberto stop to observe a party in rural Tuscany. Farmers, in their work clothes, dance the twist to accordion music, provoking great laughter from Bruno and Roberto who view the sight as absurd. Everywhere, aspects of traditional society are



Figure 4.6. *Il sorpasso*, 1962. Overtaking the peasantry, the past, and the traditional family.

relegated to history by the frenetic and nonstop pace of the duo's mobility and the freedom it affords.

The obsession with leisure and consumption equated with modern Italy is emphasized by Bruno and Roberto's numerous stops at restaurants and nightclubs. Without any distinct purpose, their time is filled with eating, drinking, and chasing after women, largely undertaken by Bruno. Roberto is forced to pay for everything. He realizes, despite Bruno's promises, that he will never be repaid, and accepts with resignation that he is being used. Each time Roberto reaches his limit with their aimless wandering, Bruno convinces him to continue on. Ultimately they reach a beach near Viareggio, where Roberto finally submits to the carefree life as best he can. On the road again, he joyfully thanks Bruno for "the best two days of my life," before encouraging him to pass the car in front of them. However, this time they are forced off the road, sending the car hurtling over the cliff and Roberto to his death.

The morbid conclusion is symbolic of the primary message of the film: The growth of a new consumer class and value system is marked by the simultaneous annihilation (rather than assimilation) of a traditional social order. In this regard, Risi's casting is particularly noteworthy, for it is Bruno the elder who teaches his younger pupil about the need to break with history in order to embrace the present. The suggestion is that changes in morality and culture occurring during the economic miracle are not exclusively generational; they are also a function of the differing degrees to which traditional values are embedded in geographic and class divisions. The fact that Roberto is played by a non-Italian actor further identifies the old ways of life as foreign, just as the South of *Mafioso*, *Divorzio all'italiana* and *Sedotta e abbandonata*, in its adherence to an antiquated social order, is framed as outside modern Italy.

Risi's presentation defies a simple affirmation of new consumer-class values. Through Bruno, the rationale underlying the burgeoning cult of consumption is exposed as superficial and individualistic. His pleasure seeking requires instant gratification, which forces him to view commodities and people as disposable. Although he is constantly in motion, his actions are always motivated by the present, devoid of direction or consideration for the future. The carefree life of leisure Bruno appears to live is revealed to be not without its complications. Near the end of the film, the audience is shown that he has a wife and teenage daughter whom he has not seen in three years. When Roberto and he pay them an unannounced visit, the consequences of "the easy life" are made apparent. His wife treats Bruno coldly, as a weary waitress would her last diner. Upon arriving home with her much older boyfriend, his daughter brushes off attempts at fatherly discipline. Bruno's inability to provide for them, along with his lack of any sense of patriarchal responsibility, has alienated him from his family for good.

The juxtaposition of Bruno and Roberto intimates the difficulty of imagining the new Italian citizen as the embodiment of mobility and the European work ethic. In *Il sorpasso*, the immobility of a traditional, rural worldview is weighed against the impermanence of an emerging urban, bourgeois value system. Locating where the two positions find common ground (if at all) is a central concern in the film, for in the tenuous relationship between tradition and modernity, the problem of constructing a populist vision of the archetypal Italian in this transformative period is brought to the forefront.

Chapter 5

Interrogating the Hegemony of the Italian Economic Miracle

The extraordinary economic, social, and cultural transformations initiated in the early postwar years were realized materially and ideologically between 1958 and 1963, the apex of Italy's economic miracle. In each of these six years, the gross national product grew by over seven percent, fueled by immense expansion of heavy industries and consumer goods production. Automobiles replaced scooters that had only recently replaced bicycles. Machinery replaced agricultural workers. Skyscrapers and tenement blocks replaced the bombed-out buildings of the immediate and distant past. Millions of Italians were on the move—from region to region, countryside to city, and city center to newly created suburbs. Southern villages emptied and northern cities overflowed, resulting in an unprecedented intermingling of peoples, dialects, lifestyles, customs, and morals.

A nation was being constructed through the promises and desires of neocapitalism. The model Italian now had a new subjectivity, spoke a new standardized, technocratic language, and adhered to a new logic that equated consumerism with civic duty. Economic prosperity facilitated a leveling of class difference and regional inequalities. In less than two decades, the majority of the Italian workforce moved from the agricultural to industrial and service sectors. During this same period, the population, which had been split almost evenly between rural and urban at the end of the war, shifted overwhelmingly to the latter. These changes (in terms of their occurrence rather than their consequences) underpinned a vision of national identity based on cosmopolitanism. The physical constructs of modernization and industrialization in the cities

merged with a view of urban culture as an egalitarian melting pot to create an image of Italian development on par with the United States and Western Europe.

The urban sphere was heralded as a promised land wherein Italy was being rejuvenated at breakneck speed. The potential achievement of steady employment, good wages, and housing enlivened the prospect for social mobility. Procurement of material wealth and commodities of convenience such as refrigerators, air conditioners, washing machines, televisions, and automobiles appeared within grasp. The concept of leisure time morphed from fantasy into an almost obligatory reality. Female emancipation began in the workplace (if not yet in regard to the body) with employment gains in factories and service industries. The growth of urban subways, tramlines, and buses enabled an unprecedented freedom of movement, while the explosion of urban retail markets offered a dizzying array of new options. The modernization of the cities united Italians in their mass-produced relations to mass-produced commodities. Consequently, the State abandoned its attempt to “make” Italians by forced assimilation in favor of a mass acculturation strategy under the pretense of choice—a tactic of creating consensus through consumption of mass culture.¹

This rendering of a nation united by middle-class aspirations and bourgeois democratic values depended, appropriately enough, on salesmanship—on the promotion of consumerism as a collective endeavor and the attainment of *la dolce vita* as an inevitability for all Italians.

Projecting Modernity: Cinema, the State, and the Deceit of Urban Luxury

The Andreotti Law of 1949 marked the first step in the Christian Democratic Party’s (DC) campaign to replace the “false images” of neorealism with those “suitable . . . to the best

interests of Italy” that presented a “ray of sunshine” and a “healthy and constructive optimism” toward Italian reconstruction.² The law established the Direzione Generale dello Spettacolo (General Directorate of Entertainment) under the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali (Ministry of Cultural Activities and National Patrimony). This agency was empowered to subsidize films that promoted a positive image of postwar social and economic change and to censor those that did not. Films deemed unacceptable via their “bleak, pessimistic, and degenerative” presentation of society were denied export licenses (thereby criminalizing their screening abroad) and severely limited in their domestic distribution.³ The financial rewards for individual films were administered on the backend, with monetary returns from the government based on a percentage of the film’s total box-office receipts. This practice encouraged filmmakers to produce mainstream films of a formulaic variety. During the first half of the 1950s, theatres were inundated with light-hearted melodramas, “pink” neorealist films, and star-driven comedies largely devoid of overt social and political criticism.

The Andreotti Law simultaneously curtailed the grip of the United States on the Italian market. Quotas were established that limited the number of American movies imported annually. Legislation also required that box-office profits made by foreign films remain in the country. As a result, the best way for foreign production companies to spend their earnings was to reinvest in Italian coproductions that could then be exported out of Italy. These films, of course, had to be specifically Italian in subject matter and content. This particular policy had an extremely positive effect on the growth of the cinema industry in the 1950s in that it generated a level of private investment in domestic production companies, studios, theatres, and technology greater than what the federal government could provide on its own.

The bolstering of the industry by the State was not undertaken simply out of economic altruism. Leaders of the DC had learned from Fascism that cinema had immense potential as a vehicle of propaganda, one that was still unsurpassed (in the 1950s) by other media in its geographic and demographic reach. In 1951, Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi formed the Centro Documentazione under the Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri (Documentation Center of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers) with the explicit purpose “to document and disseminate, both at home and abroad, information on activities of the public administration, with a special focus on reconstruction.”⁴

Although the center had a small, internal production company, most work was contracted out. The private firm, Industria Cortometraggi (INCOM), and the reborn federal institute, L’Unione Cinematografica Educativa (LUCE), produced most of the State newsreels.⁵ Between 1952 and 1959, over six hundred film shorts, usually less than ten minutes in length, were commissioned. The government ensured mass exposure of its messages through special legislation. Theaters in Italy were required to run such newsreels before foreign movies and domestic feature film premiers, and they had to agree to show them as part of every screening for at least four days. On average, the center made fifteen hundred copies of each newsreel to be viewed concurrently in an equal number of theaters. A large percentage were dubbed in English, Spanish, French, and Portuguese for exhibition throughout Europe and the Americas.⁶

Thematically, the productions were united by a pro-American, pro-DC, prointernationalist, and procapitalist idealism. They varied from the documentation of treaty signings and meetings of political leaders, public works and housing projects, and military operations to depictions of factory life, schooling, leisure activities, and local festivals. This diversity, however, was united by a recurrent tone and narrative structure that referenced all

Italian culture to a concept of State-driven progress. In the first part of the decade (1952-1954), leaders emphasized reconstruction projects and international collaboration. In the latter half (1955-1959), the dominant message trumpeted economic growth and consumerism.

Two of the first newsreels, *Ieri e oggi* (Yesterday and Today) and *Meglio di ieri* (Better Than Yesterday), made in 1952, were exceedingly positive portrayals of the rebuilding accomplishments of the Christian Democrats during the first four years of the Republic. *Ieri e oggi* is a montage of shots of monasteries, churches, piazzas, and bridges either fully restored or in the process of being rebuilt, intermixed with sequences of public works employees paving roads and turning on water pumps in front of grateful onlookers. The voice-over narration proclaims that these actions “from the streets of Milan to the fertile fields of Basilicata” are evidence of diligent efforts by the government to “replace the memory of the last twenty years” with a reality that enables all Italians to “not only dream about but live the future.”

Meglio di ieri departs from the routine structure of the newsreel by blending it with a fictional storyline. The protagonist is a Piedmontese man named Nalin who works in a small factory in the alpine Dora Valley. He takes great pride in his job but feels that his skills, work ethic, and sense of duty are underutilized in the countryside. Luckily, he hears a report on the radio from the Prime Minister himself, who calls for all hard-working and able men to fulfill their patriotic duty in the State-held factories of Milan and Turin. Nalin jumps at the opportunity and heads to Milan where he is shown happily operating a sheet metal press in a meticulously organized, clean, and well-lit industrial plant. In the concluding scene, Nalin relaxes at a café in the city center, satisfied by the nice meal he has just finished and the rewards of his new life. The intended message is twofold. Industry will guarantee economic development and a better life for those willing to contribute, and industrial employment itself is an issue of national pride.

Braccio e lavoro (Arms and Work, 1952) continues along these lines, heralding a seemingly endless list of manufacturing enterprises (e.g. automobiles, flatware, washing machines, telephones, radios, patio furniture, lamps, clocks). In this instance, the emergence of these products is framed in relation to their provision of job opportunities rather than their desirability as luxury goods. The jobs created are highlighted as complementary to the government's interest in reducing unemployment. The setting again is Milan. Unemployment is referenced only in its urban occurrence and the rate of job creation underway in the industrial sector is said to be so great that "within no time there will no longer be too few jobs but too few workers in the great Italian cities." *Made in Italy* (1953), a newsreel produced in English for circulation in the United States, reiterates the scope of economic recovery achieved through manufacturing. Notably, none of the commodities mentioned are agricultural and the national connotation "Made in Italy" is eschewed in favor of the localized articulations "Milan fashion," "Roman films," and "Turin cars."

Several newsreels showcased the physical reconstruction of cities as undertaken by the State. *Ricostruzione edilizia* (Housing Reconstruction, 1952) highlights the government-funded houses "of the future," designed not only to meet essential needs but to provide modern consumer wants. *Oggi in Lombardia* (Lombardy Today, 1953) presents this building boom specific to Milan, the "moral and economic capital of the nation." The narrator further expounds that "it is not just a case of rebuilding the old, but also of building the brand new," before excitedly repeating "houses, houses, everywhere" as the film jumps between shots of several suburban developments. In these planned and isolated neighborhoods, the narrator avers, "the well-being and tranquility . . . are signs of a solid and lasting prosperity." In *Ai margini della città* (At the Edge of the City, 1954), the setting is moved to Rome where a similar unstoppable

change for the better is also transpiring. A traveling shot begins with rebuilt, upscale apartment buildings, transitions to new modernist tenements, and ends abruptly with the first sight of a *borgata* that has sprung up in the urban periphery. The use of color (still a novelty in 1954) to depict the new developments compounds the notion that modernity has arrived.

A similar theme is laid out for Naples in *Campania industriale* (Industrial Campania, 1953). Amid scenes of commercial, industrial, and residential building projects, the narrator asserts that “the overriding imperative is to rebuild, rebuild.” Textile factories, foundries, and public works stations are touted as economic catalysts that fuel the expansion of “more than adequate” suburban neighborhoods “far away from the slums of the city center.” The film suggests that a future, utopian version of Naples is to be located outside of the old city, free of corruption, crime, homelessness, and deviance.

Newsreels that center on rural life and the South were in large part propaganda for the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* (Fund for the South). One of the earliest mentions of the development program occurs in *La terra nuova* (The New Land, 1952). In title and form, this is an obvious reference to, and repudiation of Luchino Visconti’s neorealist film, *La terra trema* (The Earth Trembles, 1948). Through a sequence of voyeuristic longshots, *La terra nuova* documents the ways federal projects are contributing to the mechanization and intensification of southern agriculture. Scenes of newly planted, large-scale orchards and fields of wheat are followed by shots of oranges and milled grain being delivered to numerous city markets and bakeries.

In 1953, LUCE produced a series of shorts on each region. Those for Basilicata, Puglia, Sicily, Calabria, Campania, and Molise all stressed the Cassa’s influence on transforming inefficient, localized, or subsistence forms of southern agriculture into efficient, modernized, and

nationally incorporated systems. The Calabrian newsreel also presages the principle doctrine of Phase II of the Cassa (begun in 1957): a shift from the promotion of agriculture to industry in the South. The narrator boasts about the government's immense progress in providing potable water and electricity to remote areas of the region and how this service has had an "unimaginable" impact on "the productivity of the agrarian workforce." Still, despite such accomplishments, the man's voice warns that the true salvation of the South will only be achieved "through industrial expansion in rural areas. Industry, not agriculture, is the solution to employment concerns and the harbinger of the future Italy."

In the second half of the decade, the newsreels turned more toward the unifying aspects of consumerism and Christian Democratic values, the assumption being that reconstruction had been fully achieved by the mid-1950s. *I nostri divertimenti* (Our Leisure Pursuits, 1955) was one of the first to highlight the rewards of economic progress. This film catalogues the first Italian-made commodities of everyday convenience and highlights their widespread availability. Automobiles and household appliances provide an unprecedented degree of free time, the narrator suggests, and this in turn enables the populace to enjoy window-shopping, sporting events, and trips to the seaside. The recurrent use of *our* to preface these leisure activities seeks to conflate individualized actions with collective experience. This is particularly acute in regard to vacationing at the beach, which is presented as the quintessential meeting space where Italians from throughout the country can "rejoice in the universal growth in prosperity."

Additional newsreels endorsed playing the lottery (*Il lotto*, The Lottery, 1955) and attending soccer matches (*La partita dello scudetto*, The Match for the Championship, 1956) as hobbies of mass consumption. *Cicli e motori* (Bikes and Cars, 1956) glamorizes the freedom of mobility accorded by personal transportation. The vehicles are discussed either as marvels of

Italian styling and engineering or as enablers of pleasurable and aimless drives through the picturesque countryside. No mention is made of their importance for getting to and from work. *Strada panoramica* (Panoramic Route, 1955) and *L'austrada del sole* (The Sun Highway, 1959) showcase the newly built portions of the State-funded highway system, the largest public works endeavor of the 1950s. Although both films briefly acknowledge the transportation system's role in uniting the country and facilitating unhindered movement, more time is devoted to roads as sites of indulgence. The modern highways are to be enjoyed more for breathtaking views and quaint roadside restaurants than for simple utilitarian function.

The State also commissioned several newsreels to promote the new medium of television. From the first signal transmission in 1954 until the early 1960s, only one domestic channel existed and it was controlled by the State agency, *Radiotelevisione Italiana* (RAI). *TV giovedì sera* (Thursday Night TV, 1956) encouraged Italians to join in the collective and live experience of watching. The newsreel specifically highlights a Thursday night quiz show, *Lascia o Raddoppia?* (Double or Nothing?), hosted by Italian-American Mike Bongiorno.⁷ This program was a wildly popular version of the American game show, "The \$64,000 Question," and similarly tested contestants' knowledge of history, current events, and mass culture. *TV giovedì sera* ritualizes the act of viewing into a national spectacle. It shows throngs of people, in rural villages and urban neighborhoods alike, parading to the local bar, restaurant, or upper-class household lucky enough to have a television set. Ensuing scenes display people reveling in this group activity—eating, drinking, and playing along with the game as a means of testing their own level of Italianness.

The importance of disseminating a common language throughout the peninsula is outlined in *La lingua di oggi* (The Language of Today, 1958). Along with shots of children being

taught to “correctly” pronounce words free of dialect, the newsreel presents adults learning new phrases associated with modernization such as “zoning permit,” “administrative approval,” and “air-conditioning.” The last film made by LUCE for the Documentation Center, *Il domani non fa più paura* (Tomorrow No Longer Frightens Us, 1959), is a patriotic summation of the accomplishments of the DC during the 1950s. Its overarching tone suggests that reconstruction and economic growth have indeed created extraordinary changes in social relations. Moreover, these modifications have normalized society and replaced uncertainty with a clear outline of progress. “Italy,” the narrator triumphantly declares, “has not been rebuilt, she has been remade into one of the greatest international economic powers.”

Exposing the Paradoxes of Modernization: Auteur Cinema and the Urban Problem

The rosy idealism put forth in the newsreels of a newly modernized nation united by prosperity, mobility, and middle-class values was countered in the late 1950s and early 1960s in emerging international “art” films. Directors such as Federico Fellini, Michelangelo Antonioni, Luchino Visconti, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Francesco Rosi challenged the authenticity of the State’s optimistic message via presentations of “everyday realities rendered invisible” by the processes of economic development.⁸ Cinematic discourse between visions of the “real” Italy espoused by the State and those by the auteur directors is emblematic of Michel de Certeau’s distinction between the use of strategy and tactics in hegemonic struggles. To de Certeau, the top-down deployment of social control administered by a centralized power involves strategic maneuverings by governments, corporations, and institutions to define space and cultural practice as unified wholes. In contrast, tacticians for the “practices of everyday life” strive to carve out spaces of resistance to authoritative forces and to contest State-defined parameters of

acceptable behavior and morality.⁹ In the art films produced during the economic miracle, directors offered acute critiques of the contradictions of modernization and collective exposure of the ways numerous Italians were excluded from the process.

The paradoxes of neocapitalism and consumer culture were particularly scrutinized, especially their supposed ability to manufacture national unity. A common theme of many of the auteur directors was that the State strategy of industrial growth exacerbated the unevenness of regional development. The tenets of economies of scale and international competitiveness dictated policy bent on fortifying existing industrial centers in the North. As a function of this, it was believed to be more cost-effective to bring southern labor to northern factories rather than the reverse. In Visconti's film, *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (Rocco and His Brothers, 1960), the mass exodus of southerners to the cities of the North is stripped of any idealistic notions of freedom accorded by personal mobility or instantaneous affluence. The film documents the relocation of a family from Basilicata to Milan and their subsequent moral, psychological, and familial disintegration. Their dreams of a better life are met with the realities of northern prejudice, unemployment, and isolation.

In its treatment of Milan's urban space, *Rocco* also exposes the fallacy of the city as a cosmopolitan melting pot, wherein the intermixing of peoples from throughout the peninsula eliminates class and cultural boundaries and enables the cultivation of new, modernized Italians. As in Fellini's *Le notti di Cabiria* (Nights of Cabiria, 1957), Pasolini's *Accattone* (1961) and *Mamma Roma* (1962), Antonioni's *Il grido* (The Cry, 1957), and Rosi's *Le mani sulla città* (Hands Over the City, 1963), the great cities of Milan, Rome, and Naples each are presented as fragmented along economic and ethnic lines, with distinct spatial divisions between center and periphery. Within these films urbanization has, in reality, taken the form of an abstract mosaic in

which the borders between lower- and upper-class, northern and southern neighborhoods appear as clearly defined tiles on a map. The recurrent juxtaposition between images of the newly improvised, working-class margins and the luxurious spectacle of the old city centers frames urbanization as a process that merely entrenches existing socioeconomic inequalities. The most notable alteration (critiqued with particular vigor in Pasolini's films), was that urbanization condensed sociocultural disparities previously dispersed across the nation into the focused geographical space of the metropolis. To Pasolini, this had the deleterious effect of reducing cultural heterogeneity to a measure of economics, in that social relations developed specific to place were being compressed by the horizontal limits of urban space and the vertical hierarchy of neocapitalism.

In a way, Pasolini's cinematic assessment predates postmodern theories developed by David Harvey, Frederic Jameson, and Edward Soja, who have argued that neocapitalism transforms space such that relations of exploitation are rendered invisible. As Jameson has suggested, it is only through certain privileged "technologies of vision," such as film, that the subordinating relationship between capital and labor, which has become cloaked by the built environment, is made visible.¹⁰ In *Le mani sulla città*, the liquidation of traditional social relations and localized identity is presented as a dreadful consequence of land speculation and the building boom in Naples. The unbridled transformation of the urban landscape is exposed as a corrupt and socially negligent process conducted by unscrupulous politicians and developers eager to capitalize on the influx of federal funds and tens of thousands of potential renters. The residents of established working-class neighborhoods in the city center are pushed to the ever-expanding margins, condemned to monolithic public tenements built by the same firms responsible for the luxury high-rises that have replaced their old homes. Disruptions to

employment, services, and community are dwarfed by an obsessive desire to liberate the central core of the nefarious imprint of the lower classes and to consolidate new migrants in the outskirts, thereby rendering their existence in the city center acceptable only as laborers.

Several “art” films, particularly works by Fellini and Antonioni, also exposed the contradictions of creating consensus through consumerism. As Antonioni noted, the paradox of such an ideology is that, whereas consumption of mass-produced goods and culture is imagined as a collective experience based on the implied frequency of the term *mass*, the act of consuming something is purely individualistic.¹¹ Taken further, the availability of various models of the same products reduces personal choice to a symbol of status, while commodities of convenience, such as automobiles, refrigerators, washing machines, and televisions, encourage isolation. The alienation of the individual as a symptom of middle-class privilege is a repeated theme in Antonioni’s films. An infectious *ennui* circulates among the main characters of *L’avventura* (The Adventure, 1960), who show little concern for the wellbeing of a friend that has disappeared during their weekend getaway aboard a yacht. Amidst their halfhearted search, the protagonists rue the emptiness of their lives of wealth and leisure. Attempts to establish connections with others are superficial and fleeting, exemplified by an affair that ensues and immediately dissolves between the missing woman’s fiancé and her best friend. The overriding aimlessness of the characters is used by Antonioni to symbolize a social anomie festering amongst the middle- and upper-classes in which apathy, neurosis, and moral degradation emerge as doleful responses to the solitude of the individual in modern society.

Estrangement from others as a consequence of modernization’s alteration of the material and social landscapes is also the underlying theme of *La dolce vita*. However, Fellini’s focus extends beyond interpersonal relationships to a critique of the hedonism and moral deviance of

upper-class culture. Sexual obsession, gluttony, and vice are the new benchmarks of the privileged class wherein the consumption of things fosters an objectification of people. The film follows the weeklong exploits of a tabloid reporter named Marcello who wheedles his way into extravagant parties of socialites, aristocrats, and intellectuals in order to unearth the latest bits of celebrity gossip and scandal. Although the plot predominantly revolves around Marcello's own narcissism and subsequent lack of meaningful relationships with his father, friends, and women, Fellini situates his behavior as a reflection of the immorality and vanity that pervades the elite classes of Rome. In tone, *La dolce vita* questions the viability of the DC's attempt to push conservative bourgeois values and mass consumption as cultural unifiers.

Maintenance of the traditional family, high moral standards, and religious faith, in tandem with qualities of frugality, decency, chastity, discipline, and respect is presented as an impossibility in the works of Antonioni and Fellini, given the simultaneous promotion of materialism and individual freedom as the rewards of economic progress. This commonality of the two directors underscores a difference between them and the other aforementioned auteurs. Whereas Antonioni and Fellini focus almost exclusively on the upper classes, Visconti, Pasolini, and Rosi center their gaze on working-class groups marginalized by the processes of modernization. The protagonists of their films are the peasants, urban proletariat, and deviants (e.g. pimps, prostitutes, drug pushers, thieves, youth, and homosexuals) excluded from the State vision of modern Italy. More often than not, it is the southerner's experience of the miracle that is used to exemplify the unevenness of economic development and social change, and as a means to interrogate the alleged benefits of the homogenization of society.

Northern Dreams, Southern Nightmares: *Rocco e i suoi fratelli*

In many ways, *Rocco* can be understood as a sequel to *La terra trema*, Visconti's neorealist masterpiece centered on the tragic inability of a Sicilian family to escape poverty and oppression. The migration of the Parondi family from rural Basilicata to Milan in *Rocco* echoes, ten years later, the saga of the Valastro clan. Both films focus on a clash of differing value systems—that of the traditional, southern peasant family and its archaic codes of loyalty and honor with the individualistic drive and liberal morality endemic to industrial society. Visconti utilizes this symmetry between the families to question whether the accomplishments of reconstruction and modernization since the immediate postwar period of the Valastros have actually proven beneficial to southerners. By moving the setting from the South to Milan, he also enables a critique of the purported empowerment garnered by migration and the effect urban industrialization has had in bridging the socioeconomic gap between regions.

Rocco opens with the arrival of the Parondi matriarch, Rosaria, and four of her sons at the central train station in Milan. They are immediately rendered out of place by their shocked reactions to the cold weather and their unfamiliarity with the city map. The emptiness of the station and the fact that no one has come to greet them continues this feeling, as does Rosaria's exchange with the ticket collector of the tram they board. Although they speak roughly the same language, the conversation is hindered by a mutual lack of understanding, as the two mimic each other's responses. As Gian Piero Brunetta has suggested, "the repetition of the words is a sign of an absolute estrangement between the two worlds, of the nearly-galactic distance between them . . . To communicate they are reduced to single words, gestures, photographs."¹² Along the way to their destination at the "end of the line,"—the eastern, migrant neighborhood of Lambrate—

the sons marvel at the city sights and the pervasive neon glow, which prompts one of them to exclaim, “It’s like daylight all the time!” [Figure 5.1].

The Parondis’ excitement towards the possibilities of city life initially remains intact, despite a litany of experiences that foretell impending hardship. Rosaria’s proclamation that “God has truly blessed this city. There is work for everyone!” proves to be naively idealistic, as her sons all deal with the very real consequences of urban unemployment, prejudice, betrayal, and isolation. The story that unfolds is structured around five vignettes loosely centered on each of the five brothers. In condensing the varying experiences of southerners in relation to northern urbanism and industrialization to a single family, Visconti achieves “a certain economy of historical explanation.”¹³ Whereas each brother symbolizes a different archetypal response to migration and socioeconomic transformation, their fates are united by an inability to preserve traditional familial bonds as a consequence of the selfishness required in their individual struggles to survive.

The Parondis’ move to the North was instigated by the passing of the father, which suggests that the family’s ties to the past and to the land have been irretrievably severed. According to tradition, the role of provider befalls on the eldest son, Vincenzo, whom the rest of the clan seeks out in Milan. Vincenzo, however, does not want this responsibility. Following a stint in the military, he chooses to live in Milan rather than return to his hometown. The patriotism manifested in his military service is rejuvenated by his happy assimilation into northern industrial culture. His fiancée, Ginetta, is from an established, middle-class Milanese family and he has a steady job working for her uncle.



Figure 5.1. *Rocco e i suoi fratelli*, 1960. Simone and Rocco stare in awe at their first sights of city life.

When his mother and brothers arrive unexpectedly, Vincenzo is faced with the burden of the past and the irreconcilable differences between his old and new life. His initial attempt to bridge the two is thwarted by Rosaria, who takes offense at the bourgeois decadence of Ginetta's family and their lack of allegiance to traditional codes of loyalty and morality. Her actions encumber his relationship with his fiancée and ultimately result in Vincenzo losing his job. Vincenzo reluctantly finds a cellar apartment for his family, but then returns to the environs of his new life, rarely to be seen by Rosario and the family again. Visconti uses Vincenzo's literal and emotional distance to frame him as one of the lucky few able to escape the confines of the rural South and achieve a better life in the northern city. This ascent, however, is clearly distinguished by its timing, in that Vincenzo's path to success began prior to reconstruction in a period of social and economic leveling, as opposed to coming from within the rigid hierarchy of industrialization.

The experience of the second brother, Simone, alludes to the destructive and dangerous effects of urban life. A handsome yet brutish lout, Simone sees boxing as a means to attain his desired life of luxury. Unfortunately, his promising career is undone by a lack of discipline and his incessant drinking, gambling, and carousing. He has a tumultuous affair with an immigrant prostitute named Nadia and Simone resorts to stealing in order to continually impress her. Nadia's unwillingness to commit to him fully leads to his psychological degeneration. He attempts to repay an exorbitant debt to a boxing agent through homosexual favors, only to be beaten and arrested in the process, leaving his brothers to cover the losses.

The middle brother, Rocco, is the saintly figure of the family. Rocco remains hopeful throughout all the Parondis' travails and constantly sacrifices his own interests to the welfare of the clan. An internal conflict does arise, however, when Rocco falls for Nadia. His genuine love

and respect for her contrasts sharply with Simone's antiquated view of her as property. Simone's anger at what he sees as his brother's betrayal leads him to rape Nadia in front of Rocco, before severely beating him. Still the unflinching martyr, Rocco tells Nadia afterwards that she must return to Simone because he needs her in order to survive. Although he has no passion for it, Rocco then becomes a prizefighter in order to cover Simone's debts. The celebration of his rise to Italian champion is tragically interrupted by Simone's admission that he has killed Nadia. Rocco quickly claims that he can fix things once again before realizing in this penultimate scene, that the sacrifices he has made to keep the family intact were all for naught. The implication, of course, is that faith and good intentions alone cannot overcome the disintegrative effects of urban estrangement and moral degradation on the traditional family.

Rocco stands as a transitional character between his two older and two younger brothers, as a man trapped between a disappearing world where social codes exist in black-and-white, and an emerging one in which the lines are malleable and blurred. His younger brother Ciro is less torn. He comes to firmly reject the traditional codes that have destroyed his older brothers and to accept the ethos and morality of modernity. Ciro finds work in construction and goes to night school to train as a mechanic. After graduating, he lands a job in the Alfa Romeo plant and subsequently meets a young Milanese woman. In similar fashion to Vincenzo, he begins to separate from his family and establish himself amongst the upwardly mobile working-class. Following Simone's murder of Nadia, it is Ciro who turns him in to the police, thereby choosing modern justice and the sanctity of his future over loyalty to the family. Rather than being entirely skeptical of the promises of modernization, Visconti uses Ciro to represent those southerners who, through hardwork, tenacity, and thick skin, "made it" in the urban North during the miracle.

The last vignette focuses on the youngest brother, Luca, not yet ten years old. His inability to comprehend the drama unfolding within his family renders him at odds with both the past and present. He blames Simone and Ciro equally for the destruction of the family: the former for bringing shame upon them through his sins, the latter for betraying his brother. He longs to return home but is not sure why. The uncertainty that surrounds his future is indicative of the ambiguity that underpins the rapid transformations taking place in Italian society generally. The absence of a definitive resolution in the film attests to Visconti's assertion that, in 1960, it was premature to equate national economic growth with sociocultural progress.

Aesthetically, Visconti highlights the spatial fragmentation of Milan in his selection of settings. The majority of *Rocco* takes place in the new migrant neighborhoods of the city fringe—areas never before seen on film and generally unknown to most established Milanese at the time. Visconti's periphery is a dark, flat, and monotonous landscape that, although populated by tens of thousands of immigrants, is generally devoid of public life [Figures 5.2 and 5.3]. Its overwhelming emptiness emphasizes internal and external alienation. The desolation not only distinguishes this new Milan from the vibrant city center, but also exposes the seclusionary response of migrants to the absence of social bonds. The only time these new neighborhoods are shown populated is in shots of the Alfa Romeo workers on break. This, however, is an anomaly, given the controlled environment of the automobile factory complex and its symbolism as modernity's rare breach of the periphery.

Visconti's portrayal of Milan's margins as bleak, lifeless, and disaggregated is little exaggerated. Through comparison of the film's images with print media photographs from the late 1950s, John Foot has uncovered a remarkable verisimilitude.¹⁴



Figure 5.2. *Rocco i e suoi fratelli*, 1960. The isolation and emptiness of the new Milanese periphery.



Figure 5.3. *Rocco e i suoi fratelli*, 1960. The urban margins at night.

Visconti filmed the actual haunts of the lumpenproletariat (e.g. the smoke-filled bars, gyms, boxing rings, underpasses, and concrete wastelands) and accurately portrayed the people of this fringe area as predominantly southerners.

The director's shots of the city center stress an estranged relationship of rural southerners to the modern city, as opposed to simply using the physical symbols of old Milan as an aesthetic contrast to the margins. The city's iconic landmarks are not presented as invocations of grandeur and modernity. Instead, they are framed as sites of despair and anxiety for southern migrants, epitomized by a scene that occurs atop the Duomo [Figure 5.4]. After being told by Rocco that they can no longer be together, Nadia surveys the dizzying chaos of the city below. Her aloneness in this moment leads her to a contemplation of suicide by jumping off the cathedral, an act that, in Nadia's words, would "contaminate the city the way it has contaminated me." Simone's visit to the upscale apartment of his boxing agent causes a crisis of moral desperation that marks him as out of place and signals his point of no return. Rocco is affected as well. During his brief stint as an errand boy at a dry cleaner, he endures the constant belittlement of the women he works for, who equate his innocence and politeness with stereotypes of southern backwardness and stupidity.

Visconti claimed that he filmed *Rocco* in black-and-white because that was how Milan appeared to southerners during the miracle.¹⁵ Ultimately, this Manichean rendering of the migrant experience is encapsulated in the contrast between Rocco's idealism and Ciro's realism. After Nadia asks him why he does not like Milan, Rocco laments the necessity of his family's move:



Figure 5.4. *Rocco e i suoi fratelli*, 1960. Southern anxiety in old Milan.

If only we had the means to live decently where we grew up. I'm lost in the city. I was neither born nor raised in one. Not only me, but my brothers and my friends, too. Some get used to city life, and they seek the pleasures of city people. Not me. I don't think that it's right. . . . I mean, I want an automobile, too, but after the things that come first. . . a steady job, a home, and eating every day.

Rocco continually holds to the dream of returning home and to the belief that such an occurrence will keep his family together. Ciro, on the other hand, realizes that Rocco has romanticized the world they left behind and knows that even southern villages cannot withstand the march of modernity. In the final sequence of the film, Luca confronts Ciro about his decision to turn in Simone.

Luca: Are you happy now that they have taken him away?

Ciro: I was a kid when we left home and it was Simone, not Vincenzo, who made me understand that in our hometown we were beasts of burden, forced to work with blind obedience. "We are not slaves," he said, "but we must not neglect our responsibilities." But Simone forgot all that and, in so doing, ended up the way he did, ruining himself and bringing shame on us all. Simone once had good roots. . . . He just let weeds overtake him. Even Rocco's goodness and generosity are misplaced. Rocco's a saint, but what can he do in this world?

Luca: If Rocco goes home, I want to go with him.

Ciro: I doubt Rocco will ever see our home again. But you might Luca. And if you do, what do you think you will find there? Things will change there, too. Many have little faith in a changed world, but I do. You, Luca, will lead a more upright and honest life.

Ciro exhibits a reluctant acceptance of modernization in his recognition that the progress unfolding throughout the country involves a consumption of peoples and places as much as of material goods. To him, the prospect of a better life for his younger brother and future generations is worth the destruction of the traditional family and the antiquated social system of the South that is occurring as a consequence of industrialization, urbanization, and consumerism.

The critical responses to *Rocco* were highly varied, mirroring the pronounced divisions within the film. Despite its gloomy tone and length (over two-and-a-half hours), *Rocco* managed

to be one of the top-ten grossing films of 1960 in Italy. It received over a dozen nominations and awards from prestigious outlets such as the Venice Film Festival, the British Academy of Film and Television, and the Italian National Syndicate of Film Journalists. The Socialist Party's newspaper, *Avanti!*, praised the film for "destroy[ing] the myth of the big city of general progress and well-being," and *L'Unità*, the Communist Party periodical, claimed *Rocco* had revealed the "dark zones of our social and civil life" and "uncovered what was rotten" with neocapitalism.¹⁶ The general consensus among the press was that, in his presentation of the previously invisible areas Milan, Visconti initiated a more open aesthetic approach to the urban periphery.

The State, however, did not share the same fondness. Visconti was indicted on charges of obscenity and indecency over his refusal to remove the film's rape and murder sequences. Even though these scenes remained in edited form, *Rocco* was still heavily censored by the State film board before release. The city council of Milan banned the film entirely, claiming it was a blasphemous and exaggerated work of fiction that attempted to undermine the overwhelmingly positive effects of immigration and industrialization.¹⁷ Apparently, Visconti's cinematic city posed a real threat to Milanese politicians who wished for the unknown Milan of the periphery to remain hidden.

Pasolini and the Search for the "Real" Italy

In the realm of intellectuals and artists of the midcentury, modernization had no greater critic than Pasolini, who, as Ben Lawton has stated, "from the mid-fifties until his death in 1975, participated vigorously in every major political, ideological, and intellectual controversy in Italy."¹⁸ A venerated poet, novelist, director, and journalist, Pasolini became the icon of the

scrittore scomodo—the “disturbing writer”—one who makes others feel awkward, inconvenienced, and annoyed. What made him a special case—an agitator of the right and left, of young and old, of governments and revolutionaries—was the way he relentlessly “irritated and disturbed the quiet pond where Italy of the economic boom rested. Everything seemed to be going so well, so his reaction seemed intolerable.”¹⁹ Between 1955 and 1975, over thirty lawsuits were filed against Pasolini by the State, with charges ranging from immorality, obscenity, and slander of federal officials to “contempt of the religion of the State” and “contempt of religious sentiment.”²⁰ Although he applied a critical eye to various topics including Catholicism, Marxism, television, youth culture, sexuality, abortion, education, semiotics, language, and politics, his canon of work is united by an impassioned and often scandalous critique of the destructive practices and ideological contradictions of neocapitalist development.²¹

Pasolini’s deep loyalties—to “everything nonbourgeois, to Marxism, to language as expression rather than instrument, and to otherness”—all stand in opposition to the defining characteristics of post-World War II Italian development.²² To him, modernization had taken the form of a “multi-headed Hydra” embodied by the coemergence of a rapidly industrializing economy, a ballooning bureaucratic and repressive State, and an accelerated linguistic and cultural homogenization of society.²³ His critique of industrialization expanded on Gramsci’s earlier claim that State-led economic development had, since unification, served to maintain the subjugation of the South by the North in an internal colonial relationship of dependency and dominance. Aside from the fundamental difference in magnitude, Pasolini distinguished industrialization of the postwar period from the past in two specific ways. Whereas previous strategies necessitated sociocultural differentiation of the regions in order to legitimate a program of strengthening the strong, the ideological underpinnings of new industrialism sought to identify

its sociological components (e.g. urbanism, internal migration, consumerism, and bourgeois values) as national virtues. Thus, in Marxist terms, the measure of Italianization of the country shifted from superstructural phenomena (northern culture and institutions) to the base (economic class).

Pasolini suggested that a principle and destructive consequence of this transformation was the emergence, for the first time in Italian history, of a truly national language. Instead of a language “of culture” that had organically evolved over centuries from the most archaic strata of the populace, the new idiom was based on the economic and technocratic demands of neocapitalism. Although he acknowledged: “it is the industrial North that possesses that linguistic patrimony which tends to take the place of dialects,” Pasolini viewed the effects of this linguistic turn to “those technical languages that we have seen homologize and instrumentalize Italian as a new unitary and national spirit,” as more than simple reiterations of northern supremacy. In supplanting the “expressive” language of oral tradition and literature, the “instrumental” language of neocapitalism fostered the replacement of “the old dominant (but not hegemonic) humanistic bourgeoisie with a new technocratic bourgeoisie (with strongly hegemonic tendencies).” By eschewing the specificity of dialects in favor of the “communicative efficiency” of an international language of economic function, Pasolini felt the emergence of a sterile and mechanical form of Italian marked the end of the “cultural period in which it was believed that the Italianization of Italy might happen under the sign of equilibrium and joint contributions of the various popular sublanguages.”

The fact that this new national language originated from within the northern aristocratic and industrial-bourgeois economic classes was particularly alarming. The danger related to the relative rapidity of the Italian industrial process, in that “while in other linguistically united

nations the technological spirit presents itself as evolutionary, . . . in Italy it presents itself as revolutionary insofar as it coincides with the formation of a (at least potentially) hegemonic class.” Prior to this moment, the Italian bourgeoisie had “not known how to identify itself with the nation” and thus, had remained a social class. The potential result of national adherence to a new idiom reflective of the bourgeoisie’s customs, privileges, and morality was the complete obliteration of the division between “bourgeois language and lower-class dialect that literary Italian had always perpetuated.”²⁴

Pasolini’s obsession with the hegemonic power of language was not born simply from a concern for literary aesthetics. He utilized the issue as a symbol for the multitude of sociocultural, physical, and economic transformations wrought by neocapitalism that were reshaping not only Italy but the world. “Italian dialects,” he wrote:

no longer belong to a particularistic national world but belong to a world that by definition is dialectical, that includes approximately half the human race, and which is placed in a scandalous dialectical relationship with the entire neocapitalistic or socialistic industrialized world.²⁵

Indicative of his Marxist leanings, this statement sheds light on the underlying motivations of the artist’s lifelong cinematic and literary emphasis on defending peasant and paleoindustrial culture. The new mode of production was resulting in no less than a “genocide” of the lower classes. Democratization was now equated with conformity to a “hedonistic consumption of superfluous goods.” Its success, Pasolini averred, was met by the attainment of “bourgeois entropy,” whereby class connotations became purely economic, and the only opening for proletarian and subproletarian inclusion in the national project was their ideological acceptance of middle-class values, regardless of the material impossibility of achieving such standing.²⁶

In this way, Pasolini establishes a correlation between his “Linguistic Question” and the Southern Question. His concern is firmly with preserving Roman-Neapolitan working-class and southern peasant culture, which he feels are the social strata most resistant to acculturation, as well as the most difficult to co-opt. Yet, the “profound cultural mutation” initiated by postwar development prompted Pasolini to position the role of the subaltern differently than his predecessor. Whereas Gramsci was interested in locating the entry points of the agrarian and proletarian masses into “the mainstream of Western thought and culture” via a “radical democratization of culture,” Pasolini pessimistically felt that modernization and Christian-Democratic rule had eliminated this possibility. Instead, he championed a wholesale refusal by the southern masses “of a society grounded in the false values of consumerism and conformity *qua* liberation.”²⁷

This abnegation of the “false consciousness of bourgeois materialism” by the Roman working-classes is a principle theme of Pasolini’s first two feature films, *Accattone* and *Mamma Roma*. Loosely based on his controversial novel, *Ragazzi di vita* (1955), *Accattone* centers on the life and death of a thieving pimp living in the *borgata* of Gordiani, an isolated enclave southeast of Rome. Hastily constructed in the 1930s, the Gordiani tenements were made of the cheapest materials and lacked running water and electricity. At the time Pasolini was shooting *Accattone*, the already dilapidated neighborhood was undergoing fullscale demolition and reconstruction as a target area of Rome’s urban expansion.²⁸

In the film, Pasolini presents proletarian culture of the *borgata* as insular, entrenched, and proudly antimodern. This distinguishes his cinematic envisionment of the Roman margins from Visconti’s Milanese outskirts in *Rocco*. Whereas Visconti wanted to expose the lack of social bonds and community inherent in the new, predominantly migrant, urban periphery, Pasolini’s

goal is to reveal the social and moral vibrancy of the “old” working-class peripheries even as they are being obviated by the new urban plan facilitated by the economic boom [Fig. 5.5].

In *Accattone*, the Roman *borgata* is positioned as an inbetween space whose degree of physical and cultural survival is a symbolic measure. The film focuses on the feasibility of resisting a homogenized future without being reduced to history. In an opening sequence, the principle character, Accattone, as part of a bet, leaps from a bridge into the Tiber. His jump, as Marcia Landy has suggested, signifies the audience’s “immersion into another dimension of reality.” Accattone’s emergence from underwater and arrival upon the bank evokes Dante’s *Purgatorio* (an allusion also made in the intertitle at the beginning of the film).²⁹ This reference also carries a spatial connotation. As a realm of limbo between heaven and hell, purgatory is a perfect metaphor for the *borgata*: a physical space positioned between Pasolini’s personal hell of the modern, transformed city and his idealized heaven of the subproletarian countryside [Fig. 5.6].

Pasolini frames the *borgata* and its inhabitants as emphatically opposed to prevailing visions of modern Italy. He accomplishes this by utilizing many tropes of neorealist filmmaking: nonprofessional actors, lower-class subjects, location shooting, natural lighting, a documentary “feel,” and, most important, the specific dialect and slang of the Gordiani youths. However, the film deviates from the neorealist tradition in two crucial ways. It is devoid of the ideological optimism of its predecessors. This is symptomatic of the director’s assertion that neorealism was a “dead expression” tied to the immediate postwar period, whose power to persuade “ended with the reconsolidation of power in the hands of the church and the bourgeoisie.”³⁰



Figure 5.5. *Accattone*, 1961. The neighborhood stands united against Accattone's thievery.



Figure 5.6. *Accattone*, 1961. Accattone woos his new prostitute in front of the Villa Gordiani—the new housing community being built to replace the old *borgata*.

Accattone and his cohorts are not heroic; Pasolini makes no attempt to present the main characters as prototypes of an alternate, working-class national culture. No progress occurs from a life of deviance to one of moral decency. Accattone himself has no redeeming qualities: he prefers being a pimp to any form of labor; he steals from anyone and everyone (including his son); he abandons his wife and all familial responsibilities; and he is destructively narcissistic and fatalistic. Yet, it is these characteristics that render his assimilation into the mainstream an impossibility, for he measures his wealth by the power he lords over prostitutes and the respect he garners from fellow crooks. The lure of consumer goods and upright employment has no value according to his archaic code of honor. As evidence, he eschews his given name, Vittorio, for Accattone (“beggar,” “scrounger”) since the latter holds greater merit in the world in which he circulates.

Contamination is a primary theme of *Accattone*, which also serves to differentiate Pasolini’s work from classic neorealism. The film is more appropriately a pastiche, as neorealist elements are intermixed with a poetic and lyrical aesthetic. Pasolini inverts Catholic iconography throughout the film and, as Peter Bondanella has noted, Accattone is easily read “as a Christ figure in reverse.”³¹ There is an overarching juxtaposition of past and present and of high and low culture: the music of Bach and Mozart frame the reprehensible acts of thugs and thieves; Dante’s prose is followed by slang vulgarities; and the faces of the subproletarian characters are framed in ways reminiscent of Quattrocento and Mannerist paintings. This recurrent blending of sacred and profane is a subversive device. Pasolini suggests that attempts to acculturate the marginalized lower classes foster an undesirable cross-contamination of bourgeois culture. However, the technique is also an admission, for the director acknowledges that the very threat of this potential corruption leads the hegemonic classes not to evangelize but to demonize (and

ultimately liquidate) the subaltern. This juxtaposition, then, is intended to force the viewer “into an awareness of the loss sustained from industrial development and the acquisition of self-consciousness”—for Pasolini, a bourgeois vice—and it underlines the mythical qualities of life abandoned by modern culture.³²

The film’s “radical reversal of judgment on the subproletariat” seeks to simultaneously undo and reinforce myth.³³ Like Visconti’s presentation of the everyday realities of “unknown” Milan, Pasolini’s naturalistic portrayal of the *borgata* and the lives of the Roman lower classes intends to demystify middle-class stereotypes of the urban subproletariat that have arisen from detached imagination rather than direct experience. His desire to convey a realistic portrait of the peripheral and marginalized segments of the city stems from an insistence that, at the time *Accattone* was made (in 1961), “no middle-class person knew exactly what the urban subproletariat (and specifically the Roman subproletariat) was and how it lived.”³⁴ Pasolini saw this ignorance as a useful tool of the bourgeoisie. The dominated classes could be framed as nothing short of an inferior “race,”—an Other whose livelihoods, speech, appearance, and codes of morality existed outside of the contemporary world. Thus, the “radical and objective destruction of this world” was rationalized as a necessity of the progression of the modern nation.³⁵

Pasolini’s paean to life at the margins is not a plea for acceptance or integration of the southern working-classes into mass culture. Rather, he seeks to counter the belief that defining characteristics of subproletarian culture have no place in conceptualizations of postwar nationalism. *Accattone* is presented as evidence against the conviction that “modernity, by definition, is life without myth”—an assertion that includes a metaphor of backward-versus-modern and implies that a “correct” historical trajectory exists for the nation-state.³⁶ He posits

life of the *borgata* as primordial and preindustrial, bound by an epical-religious superstition and an antimaterialist social hierarchy. It is a world that, as Gino Moliterno has stated:

for all its material poverty and its atavistic violence, its misery and apparent amorality – or perhaps precisely because of them – is nevertheless one of the few remaining sites of resistance to the spread of secular bourgeois morality and its concomitant religion of affluence and consumerism.³⁷

For Pasolini, it is locating and exposing the concreteness and viability of this mode of life in the contemporary world that enables his interrogation of the hegemonic success of neocapitalist culture arising from the economic miracle.

The Myth of Consensus and the “Sexual Problem”: *Comizi d’amore*

Of Pasolini’s major cinematic works, the 1964 documentary, *Comizi d’amore* (Love Meetings) is the one least known and critically analyzed outside of Italy. Yet, it is the most accessible and straight-forward film by the director. Lacking the nuanced visual aesthetic and complex allegorical weavings of his fiction films, *Comizi d’amore* is a bare and uncompromising assessment of the country’s lack of ideological and moral consensus at the apex of the economic miracle [Fig. 5.7]. This “national inquest on sex,” as Pasolini called it, effectively maps the absence of accord throughout the entire country (including Sardinia and Sicily). Although Pasolini clearly provokes the North-South dichotomy through a contraposition of responses from northern intellectuals and southern peasants, he is equally intent on highlighting the vast diversity in attitudes and behavior within the two macroregions. This is done by prefacing all interviews with a textual identification of location (e.g. “An Artisan’s Workshop in Florence,” “A Soccer Field in Veneto,” “In Front of the University of Bologna,” “Outside a Factory in Milan,” “Anywhere in Calabria,” “Inside the Mafia’s Sicily,” “A Bar in Catanzaro,” and “Debate on a Tuscan Beach”).



Figure 5.7. *Comizi d'amore*, 1964. Pasolini uncovers the myth inherent in Sicilian children's concepts of birth.

The overarching theme of sexuality is particularly informative, for it stands at the intersection of Pasolini's personal, theoretical, and symbolic interests. Lines of questioning traverse birth, marriage, divorce, virginity, promiscuity, prostitution, and female liberation. Pasolini's public homosexuality also adds an additional air of intrigue, for the director is clearly interested in demarcating class-based and geographical differences in the abhorrence and tolerance of his own "deviance." Yet, the act of making sexuality public via the documentary is not itself subversive. Owing to Michel Foucault, Angelo Restivo has noted how the "very act of speaking sex is. . . precisely the social project of modernity." Italy had reached the stage of advancement where sex had become an "issue," in which the "regulation of bodies" attempted to establish a national consensus regarding a wide range of practices.³⁸

For Pasolini, the symbolic relevance of sexuality is tied to the way it resists commodification. That is, sexual practice defies inclusion as a material object or service of bourgeois consumerism, since consumption that establishes monetary value (e.g. prostitution) exists firmly outside the bounds of acceptable moral behavior. In *Comizi d'amore*, the supposedly secular and rational attitudes of the educated upper classes are shown to be contaminated by myth and archaic tradition. The constructedness of the Symbolic Order is exposed through the vacillating and often hypocritical responses of Italy's "modern" citizens: e.g. a Tuscan man who can accept adultery but not divorce (since the latter desecrates the sanctity of the family); a Bolognese student who feels she is free to be sexually active before marriage but "chooses" not to out of respect for her parents; and a Milanese professional who views homosexuality as "against God" but sees prostitution, humorously, as a part of "the way things have always been, even since Adam and Eve!" The incongruity of these replies reinforces Pasolini's main claims. The fact that individual belief systems are rife with contradictions does

not bode well for the attainment of national consensus. Also, the liberation of the individual (a tenet of modernization) neither necessarily fosters greater tolerance of difference nor eliminates the influence of class and community on personal belief.

These assertions are shrewdly examined in two scenes. The first is a segment entitled, “To Be a Don Juan or a Good Father?,” in which Pasolini asks a group of soldiers about their personal preferences to be a lothario or a family man. The men are filmed in front of the Palazzo della Civiltà del Lavoro (nicknamed the “Square Colosseum”), the most iconic structure of Mussolini’s EUR (Esposizione Universale Roma) development [Fig. 5.8]. The intention is clearly to equate the military with Fascism and to position the army “as the traditional site by which the national subject can be wrested from local ties and turned into an ‘Italian’.”³⁹ Once the visual association is made, however, Pasolini deconstructs the notion that the military is a monolithic national symbol of Italianness. He distinguishes the men individually by addressing them with nicknames based upon their regional origins, as in “Tu, abruzzese,” “Tu, romano,” and “Tu, toscano.” Each time, the camera pans the crowd and then zooms in on the face of the appropriate man. This framing technique emphasizes the predominance of the local over the national by “tricking” the viewer into believing physiognomic characteristics are uniquely tied to place. The men’s divergent responses are thereby intimated to be influenced by regionally specific value systems that ultimately defy the symbolic conformity expressed by their uniforms.

In the second sequence entitled, “Disgust or Pity?,” Pasolini turns his inquiry toward differences in attitudes about homosexuality between the northern bourgeoisie and southern lower classes. This juxtaposition is constructed as a means of uncovering the level of tolerance that exists concerning deviant forms of behavior.



Figure 5.8. *Comizi d'amore*, 1964. The military, conformity, and the ghost of Fascism.

Outside a dance hall in Milan, Pasolini asks a young woman if she has heard about sexual “inverts.”

Woman: Yes, but I don’t know what they are.

Pasolini: One day you will marry and will have children who could be like them.

Woman: Let’s hope not. Maybe if they are as children they can be taught to change—to be normal.

This is followed by a young man who expounds how appealing he is to women on account of his proper upbringing and university education. Pasolini asks if he knows what “inverts” are, and the man answers nonchalantly that he once dated a lesbian, and he has met men who live as women. But when the director inquires about his feelings toward these people, his response is “disgust,” a sentiment reiterated by two teenage girls.

On a commuter train in Turin, several middle-aged businessmen are interviewed. Their remarks about abnormal sexuality are laden with words such as *disgust*, *horror*, *revulsion*, and *repugnance*. One man comments that “if indeed it does happen, it should be severely repressed.” Another angrily takes offense to Pasolini’s hypothetical scenario involving the man’s son being homosexual. He asserts: “sexuality should be considered only to the right degree: for reproduction, exaltation of the family, and the species.”

This line of questioning is continued on the streets of Catanzaro (in Calabria) where the director asks both young and old men, “Why is someone inverted?” Their answers are virtually identical: “It’s nature;” “He’s born with the desire to go with other men;” “There is no scientific reason;” and “It’s not learned from practice.” Pasolini’s follow-up question—“What do you feel for these people?”—is met with a similar uniformity. The overwhelming response is “pity,”

which one man reasons is the rightfully sympathetic attitude to have toward “those condemned by the mainstream for being themselves.”

These scenes portray northerners as bound by a conservative moral code that predicates their responses of disgust, anger, and the threat of violence to nonconforming behavior. In contrast, southerners exhibit apathy and passive acceptance of the abnormal. The irony is thick, for the audience’s expectations are in opposition to the reality presented by Pasolini. The North, so identified with progressivism, modernity, and emancipation of the individual exudes a hard-line intolerance to difference, while the South, so archaic and traditional, exhibits permissiveness of alternative and subversive lifestyles.

The penultimate chapter of *Comizi d’amore*, entitled “The Real Italy?,” effectively summarizes Pasolini’s underlying message of the film. Posited as a question, the statement alludes to the director’s assertion that the profound lack of consensus he documents casts doubt on hegemonic claims that define “real” Italians as those united by the “industrial Puritanism” of consumer culture.⁴⁰ Of course, the uncertainty of the title also acknowledges Pasolini’s theoretical skepticism concerning the possibility of locating the “real” at all. The inability to validate the truthfulness of the respondents’ answers contributes to this problem.

The six scenes of the sequence all occur on a beach. Here, Pasolini supplies a thorough sampling of regions with interviews from the coastal playgrounds of Rome, Milan, Calabria, Liguria, and Tuscany.⁴¹ This sameness in setting is crucial symbolically, for the beach “is the place in which the new social totality is imagined: as a mobile, undifferentiated mass diverting itself in a national ritual of vacation.”⁴² In each place, Pasolini asks a similar set of questions on marriage, divorce, and gender equality. The editing in these scenes is pointed and transparent.

The remarks he chooses to include are meant to reinforce prevailing impressions of regional specificity.

The Romans appear passionate and argumentative, and there is a great disjunction between young and old concerning the subservience of women and the desire to see divorce legalized. The Milanese project a calm and detached rationality to Pasolini's question of the importance of sex in their lives. One man comments that "sex is a hobby, not a central facet of life. We neglect activities not closely connected to work." The attitudes of the Calabrians are shown to be thoroughly archaic and mythic. On the topic of sexual honor, a young man explains how, in the South, a woman is "like an angel. . . . Like Dante saw her. Purity is necessary. Spiritual, physical, moral." When Pasolini asks if this requirement only applies to women, the man answers, "yes." This sentiment is echoed by the women he interviews, who express traditional views of gender roles and inequalities. On the beaches of the Italian Riviera, the women display a complete disdain for this "antiquated and oppressive morality of the South." Lounging in bikinis and faddish accoutrements, two women take pride in their sexual freedom and disinterest in ever marrying.

The two scenes of the Tuscan beach expand these regional differences to the sphere of class. Although they are the same space, Pasolini divides the beach into "Working-Class" and "Bourgeois" sections. In the former scene, a concessions worker discloses her conviction that marriage is the answer to the "sexual problem," before admitting that divorce is the most reasonable solution for couples unable to get along. In the latter, Pasolini privileges the response of a father holding his son, who feels that divorce will only desecrate the sanctity of marriage.

Pasolini: You defend the family nucleus?

Man: Yes, indeed.

Pasolini: Society must be based on this nucleus?

Man: Absolutely.

Pasolini: Why?

Man: Because that's how it is. I'll explain: The family provides training for the children, so it forms the citizen, the future nation, the future people. So, if children aren't reared to respect the family, how can they become adults with moral rectitude?

The father's response reflects "the traditionalist notion that the State is simply an extension of the family," and evokes a central tenet of Mussolini's nationalist program. Pasolini subsequently frames these comments as evidence of a "Christian-Democratic fascism," which he contends is nothing less than a repressive continuation of "Fascist fascism." The only change that has occurred is an alteration in method, in that the dominant strategy of generating national unity has simply morphed from the use of force to a cultivation of consent and then again to the conformism of bourgeois consumer society.

In summary, the main objective of *Comizi d'amore* is to subvert the notion that consensus is being achieved via national adherence to the moral logic of modernization. Through a cinematic mapping of the heterogeneity that exists in dialect, appearance, behavior, and belief, Pasolini questions the viability of constructing the archetypal "modern" Italian. However, his interest in empowering the voices of the subaltern is hampered by a visual romanticization. Although the voyeuristic long-shots of the southern peasantry in particular are designed to convey their Otherness, they unintentionally reinforce the social class as an object [Fig. 5.9]. This brings into question the degree to which Pasolini's desire to insert the South into the national



Figure 5.9. *Comizi d'amore*, 1964. The aesthetic construction of peasants as objects of Otherness.

question acts as a tactic of resistance to hegemonic discourses. Might it instead reflect the very strategy that posits the region as outside the realm of inclusion? This “double bind” is epitomized by the director’s interview with the journalist Oriana Fallaci. Fallaci argues that even working-class women have attained a sexual and emotional freedom unknown until the last few years. Pasolini interjects to qualify, “In Milan, Fallaci. In Milan!,” then queries: “What about the Calabrian subproletariat?” Fallaci stares dumbfounded for a moment before responding with resignation, “That’s another planet!”

Chapter 6

Popular Cinema and the Deconstruction of the Myths of Modernization

Concurrent with the formal, ideological, and political innovation characteristic of auteur cinema of the late 1950s and 1960s, a series of popular genres emerged as direct result of, and response to, the economic boom. In contrast to the layered aestheticism and psychological abstraction of the art films, and their association as products of northern intellectualism, the genre pictures as a whole were steeped in escapist spectacle—replete with transnational and transhistorical allegory, parodic sensationalism, and a Manichean rendering of good and evil, insider and outsider. Most favored of the numerous formula genres were the historical/mythological epics, or “peplum,” and the Italian, or “spaghetti” westerns.¹ The particular success and longevity of these genres was almost entirely dictated by their appeal to southern audiences, rendering popular cinema of this period decidedly a “cinema for the South.”²

Economic growth facilitated by postwar industrialization led to a reinjection of funds into the State-run Cinecittà studio at a level unseen since the formation of the film complex under Fascism. Beginning in the late 1950s, Cinecittà adopted an assembly-line approach *à la* the Fordist model, emphasizing rapidity and quantity in film production that mirrored the underlying design of the entire manufacturing sector. With the overwhelming proportion of durable and nondurable goods consumed by northern urbanites, film was seen as a viable consumption for southerners and therefore a means of incorporating them into the national economy. Although this targeting of southern audiences had clear ideological underpinnings, it also had a more simplistic economic function. The creation of thousands of *terza visione* (third-run theaters) in the Mezzogiorno during the 1950s endowed the film industry with a substantial untapped market.

Whereas these predominantly rural and provincial theaters had been solely the recipients of outdated films from the *prima* and *seconda visione* of northern and urban areas (and thus, where domestic and foreign films “went to die”), in the late 1950s they began to show movies made specifically for their audiences.

This *terza visione* strategy naturally required producers to ascertain what kinds of films southern theater-goers would buy. In this instance, consumption habits defined production, a rare reversal in which southern tastes were empowered with a tangible input into national mass-culture production. Of course, this position of influence was beset by a lack of self-determination that once again rendered southern culture vulnerable to stereotyping. Even though movies made successful (i.e. profitable) by the millions of southern audience members did not originate from the South, the popularity of certain genres in the region led to a conflation of the themes and tones of these films with southernness. Along with often implausible and fantastical plotlines, the hackneyed and laughable production value of many of these films fostered their outright dismissal by critics as “pulp distractions.” The political left also chastised them for amounting to nothing more than *panem e circenses* (bread and circuses) for the masses, devoid of any relevant sociopolitical criticism.

As a result, critics explained the unfathomable popularity of the peplum and spaghetti western genres chiefly as a function of the unsophisticated and uneducated tastes of southern audiences. They resoundingly discarded any thought that the narrative theses of these films fostered discursive engagement among southerners. Christopher Wagstaff’s assessment of Italian cinema-going habits of the 1960s unintentionally reiterated this belief. In a denunciatory summation of the generic southern *terza visione* patron, he stated that the typical (male) viewer “would not bother to find out what was showing, nor would he make any particular effort to

arrive at the beginning of the film. He would talk to his friends during the showing whenever he felt like it, except during the bits of film that grabbed his (or his friends') attention."³ Similarly, Christopher Frayling condensed the prevailing critical (and in Frayling's words, "northern") sentiment toward the genre films into a simple and derisive motto: "They were not for *us*, you understand, but for *them*—the less demanding punters queueing up outside the Roxy Calabria."⁴

Such generalizations fueled a derogatory correlation of the subjects and subject matter of the peplum and spaghetti westerns with the southern lower classes. Elitists reasoned that pulp genres were popular in the South because they culturally and spatially represented the contemporary reality of the region—an antimodern, primitive, and isolated place irrationally bound by folklore and myth. The feeble-minded heroes of the peplum films who relied on brawn over brains were merely antiquated incarnations of the peasant labor force; the chauvinistic treatment of women as subservient objects echoed the archaic gender roles of parochial society; the penchant for violence as the principal method of conflict resolution equated with longstanding claims of the South as a savage and criminal space; and the distant and desolate settings of the ancient world and the Wild West provided verisimilitude to the natural and built environment of the rural Mezzogiorno.

Although the visual iconography and story lines of these films in no way reflected modern southern society, they nonetheless have been fused into postulations of the region's identity. Over the last forty years, little critical assessment has challenged or dispelled such superficial connections between popular cinema and the South.⁵ In this chapter, I theorize that the popularity of the peplum and spaghetti westerns is indicative of a southernist reaction to modernization. This is not to deny that Italian mass cinema of the 1960s was apolitical and acritical, rife with escapism and anti-intellectualism. However, the social relations presented in

the peplum films provided a metaphorical relevance to the strata of the southern population excluded from postwar industrial growth. The glorification of banditry and the rise of the antiestablishment hero in the spaghetti westerns offered a pointed critique of social justice and the nation-building process in 1960s Italy, while the prolific revision of the most symbolic of American film genres alluded to the South's schizophrenic feelings toward the United States. The U.S. was still the "land of opportunity" as imagined by millions of southerners during the first great wave of emigration, and its lead role in the liberation of the South from the Axis Powers had not been forgotten. Yet, its domineering influence on Italian postwar culture and economic development increasingly fueled a portrayal of America as an imperialist boogeyman in collusion with the North, intent on nothing less than the complete subjugation of the South. In this light, it is possible to reposition hypotheses concerning the overarching intent of the spaghetti westerns from an exogenous deconstruction of the Frontier Myth to an endogenous inquest on the myths of Italian modernization.

The "Triumph of the Torso": Subproletarian Ethos and the Peplum

Between 1957 and 1965 (coinciding with the apex of the economic miracle), nearly three hundred peplum films inundated Italian theaters. Also known as "sword-and-sandal," and "*film storico-mitologico*," the peplum dominated the domestic box-office during this period, accounting for over sixty percent of cinema revenue. In 1962-63, this extended internationally, with pepla earning as much as forty-six percent of all Italian exports.⁶ The basic formula was simple: a strongman hero battles (and defeats) various agents of "evil" in predominantly ancient settings, all in the name of freeing an oppressed people, rescuing a fair maiden in distress, or both. The protagonists were mythical (Achilles, Ajax, Hercules, Ulysses), historical (Spartacus,

Thaur), biblical (Goliath, Samson), literary (Saetta, Ursus), and invented (Maciste) musclebound specimens of masculinity. Their weapon of choice was brute strength which, in tandem with their unsurpassed improvisational skills, aided in defeating a litany of sadistic despots, mythological beasts, marauding armies, savage natives, and corrupt politicians and landowners.

The two most popular and recycled figures were Hercules and Maciste, the former being the hero of twenty-two films, and the latter over thirty.⁷ The character of Maciste embodies a specifically Italian, albeit fictional, heritage. Conjured as a freed Roman slave from the Marche region, his presence in the 1960 film, *Maciste nella valle dei re* (Maciste in the Valley of the Kings) marked a cinematic reappearance after a thirty-year hiatus. Maciste had made his debut in the 1914 silent classic, *Cabiria*, assisting the Roman noble, Fulvio Axilla, in the rescue of the title character from the hands of the Carthaginians. Unprecedented international success for this nationalist epic made the strongman a highly recognizable icon of on-screen populist heroism and catapulted the actor, Bartolomeo Pagano, from dockworker in Genoa to film legend. Pagano went on to star as Maciste in twenty-six “sequels” between 1915 and 1926.⁸ These films provided both the narrative template and historical connection that propelled the resurgence of the pepla in the 1960s.

The postwar manifestations, however, differed from their predecessors in three important ways. In aesthetics and tone, they shed the cloying aspects of earlier incarnations, replacing melodrama and sentimentality with spectacular action and overt sexuality.⁹ At the level of consumption, the films of the 1960s represented a major demographic shift. Whereas the silent-era epics were seen almost exclusively by an urban, bourgeois, and literate audience (capable of reading the intertitles and affording the luxury of cinema-going), the nascent versions captivated newly emergent rural, peasant, and working-class audiences, particularly in the South.

Concerning production, pepla of the economic miracle initiated a fifteen-year cycle of American collaboration, financing, and influence on the Italian film industry. Although the U.S. had maintained the greatest part of the foreign-film market in Italy since the end of World War II, the genre pictures churned out by Cinecittà beginning in the late 1950s signaled a movement toward American control of *domestic* production, in terms of direction, casting, and content, and the incorporation of Italian films into the Hollywood-designed global distribution network.

The international relationship was evident from the outset of the peplum genre, epitomized by the first breakout hit, *Le fatiche di Ercole* (The Labors of Hercules, 1957). The role of Hercules was played by American bodybuilder, Steve Reeves, a former Mr. Universe long on muscles and short on acting ability [Fig. 6.1]. Panned by critics for its amateurish production and acting, infantile dialogue, and historical inaccuracies (ironically, to traditional *myth*), the film was a huge hit amongst the domestic audience. Raking in over nine hundred million lire in less than a year, it became the highest grossing film in Italian history—an honor it would hold only briefly before being overtaken multiple times by the sequels and imitators it spawned. *Ercole* garnered a similar international bounty, owing largely to an extravagant publicity campaign unleashed by Boston film mogul, Joseph E. Levine. Levine spent over five times the film's original budget on advertising in the U. S. prior to its 1959 release. Grossing over eighteen million dollars, *Ercole*'s astronomical returns enticed other American investors to seize upon the profitability of peplum films.¹⁰

The mark of Hollywood was most visible in the men chosen for the heroic leads. Reeves's instant popularity inspired the casting of other American bodybuilders including Mark Forrest, Ed Fury, Brad Harris, Gordon Scott, and Rock Stevens. Such foreign domination



Figure 6.1. *Le fatiche di Ercole*, 1957. American actor Steve Reeves as Hercules.

sparked the formation of *The Society to Protect Italian Musclemen*, a lobbying group that pressured Cinecittà to hire Italian *fusti* (bodybuilders) for peplum films.¹¹ Still, even when Italians were cast as major characters, they usually assumed anglicized names (e.g. Sergio Ciani as “Alan Steel;” Adriano Bellini as “Kirk Morris”). Surprisingly, successful actors were rarely associated with singular heroes. Instead, they each played multiple figures that defied the conventional logic of serial formulas. This suggests an industry belief in the value of the actor over the character and, according to Maggie Günsberg, rationalized the use of American leading men as a means “to attract audiences addicted to Hollywood productions.”¹²

Günsberg has reasoned that the Italian fondness for pepla starring Americans derived from a combination of economy and memory. Postwar inundation of American films on the Italian market meant that, for nearly fifteen years, cinema attendees consumed, and subsequently came to desire, cultural productions of the United States more so than their domestic counterparts. Fueling a vicious cycle of American dominance in product creation and profit extraction, this occurrence severely retarded the redevelopment of the Italian film industry. Even though this phase ended in the late 1950s as domestic films grew, Italians had developed a “taste” for the stars, directors, style, and America-centric themes of Hollywood pictures.¹³

The extraordinary popularity of peplum films in the South, as Günsberg has suggested, was also indebted to the emotional imprints of past experiences specific to the region. The American-led liberation of Italy during World War II unfolded from the “bottom up,” beginning in Sicily and quickly advancing through the southern regions, Rome, and eventually the North. Whereas the Italian resistance movement played a major part in the final defeat of Fascism and Nazism from their strongholds in the Northeast, it was virtually nonexistent in the South.¹⁴ By extension, the adoration for American film stars could be explained in terms of cultural

resonance, “for their use in the role of heroic protectors of the oppressed in the peplum films may have struck a positive chord in relation to these historical events of over a decade earlier.”¹⁵

The veracity of this wartime explanation is compounded by recognition of the strongman’s role in rural tradition. In this way, the popular affinity of southern audiences for peplum heroes can be viewed as a rational response to the discouraging experiences of modernization. By reassuring viewers of situations where strength prevails over intellect and political power, the peplum hero provided an emotional outlet for the millions of agrarian laborers who migrated from the South to the North, only to find their physical skills undervalued by their industrial counterparts. Instead of being a ruler, the strongman was a man of the people. As a fighter for the populist cause, his actions defied the individualistic ethos of bourgeois consumerism and offered an alternative vision of success “for those excluded from the new, increasingly industrialized base of economic prosperity.”¹⁶

One of the most prolific directors of pepla, Domenico Paolella, contextualized the social significance of the genre’s southern popularity in an article entitled, “*La Psicoanalisi dei Poveri*” (“The Psychoanalysis of the Poor”). Responding to the general dismissal of a genre that “captivated seven out of every ten cinema-goers from 1957 to 1965,” Paolella argued that the peplum conquered the box office because it effectively identified the power relations inherent in modernization. By privileging the visual over the literary and the emotional over the intellectual, the genre allowed all strata of the population to understand and to participate in the debate over social change. Paolella posited that the vast migrations from the South to the North and from countryside to city, the loosening of family bonds, the rise of consumerism and technocracy, and the diffusion of bourgeois values all occurred with such simultaneous rapidity that it became impossible to maintain stability. In his words:

The films are full of images which are part of the language of dreams, and hidden within them, in symbolic form, are all the obstacles encountered in everyday life. The monsters are the factories or workshops, the towns, the offices; the enemies are other people; the elaborate weapons of the adversary are complicated machines; the rivers of fire, the no less dangerous streams of traffic which choke our towns. And, in the middle of this hostile and confusing world, full of traps and snares (or, in other words, reality) there is the individual with his extraordinary muscles who can only in the end count on himself.¹⁷

The “triumph of the torso” thus served to reassure those disenfranchised by the dizzying pace of socioeconomic transformation that they were not entirely inept in the modern world.

Despite the genre’s drift toward comic absurdity, with heroes transgressing time and space to battle Moon Men, Mole People, Russian Czars, Mongols, and the Inca, the universal applicability of a primordial mastery of physical might and the need for populist liberators of the oppressed remained central themes. For the southern rural and lower-class audiences so enamored with these films, the strongman represented a traditional and indigenous symbol of pride. Even if his skills had no place in the modernizing nation, they had great symbolic value to those wanting to curtail the maddening march of social and economic change. At the very least, the peplum genre paved the way for the spaghetti western in two vital ways. First, it successfully developed a substantial audience predisposed to the outsider hero and defender of the exploited. And second, the genre’s reassertion of myth as an ideological contrast to technocratic rationalism, laid the groundwork for the use of new mythic heroes and historical eras that contained greater symbolic resonance and metaphorical translation in relation to the divisive characteristics of modernization.

Between History and Modernity: The Bandit

The peplum genre may have created the industrial framework that enabled the subsequent ascendancy of the spaghetti western, but the message of the Italian outlaw films was heavily indebted to two award-winning auteur pictures of the early 1960s: *Banditi a Orgosolo* (Bandits of Orgosolo, 1960), directed by Vittorio De Seta, and *Salvatore Giuliano* (1962), by Francesco Rosi.¹⁸ The films have two principal commonalities. Thematically, they analyze the viability of banditry as both a legitimate response to economic marginalization in the modern nation, and a pillar of folkloric reason and resistance. Aesthetically, Rosi and De Seta deploy narrative structures and filmic techniques that evoke the neorealist tradition; however, their methods more accurately reflect the “film inquest” articulated by Cesare Zavattini—a reassessment of neorealism that moves “from an *attitude* toward the phenomenal world to an *analysis* of the world.”¹⁹ Together, the films bridge the gap between low and high cinema. Their presentation of populist heroes of the rural South unfolds within an ideological lens critical of postwar politics, neocapitalism, and bourgeois morality.

The commonalities of Rosi and De Seta would greatly influence the works of Sergio Leone, who recognized the disseminative power afforded by melding popular narratives of genre films with visual artistry of auteur cinema. Leone’s films captivated both the art-house crowds of the *prima* and *seconda visione* and the audiences of the *terza visione*. Other spaghetti directors seized upon the precedent set by *Banditi a Orgosolo* and *Salvatore Giuliano* to inject genre cinema with sociopolitical criticism in a way that amounted to a slight reversal of Rosi’s and De Seta’s contamination of auteur film with rural and southern myth. Most importantly, these two films acknowledged the subversive power of the bandit, thus emboldening allusions to the postunification period when banditry was seen as a positive attribute of resistance within the

South. Transferred to modern Italy, its continued existence illustrated the incompleteness of modernization and the failure of economic development to create national consensus.

A symbol of class pride, the bandit resonated particularly with southern subproletarian culture, since he historically “comes out of very concrete conditions: he is a figure of peasant societies, and specifically, from the mobile, surplus population of those societies.”²⁰ Although banditry has existed throughout history, its occurrence has been almost entirely wiped out in the modern world. In fact, the extermination of the phenomenon is framed as a primary measure of modernity’s success. As Eric Hobsbawm has noted, the extension of transportation and communication infrastructures, the expansion of economic markets and points of production, and the encroachment of national bureaucracies into rural areas effectively removed the conditions necessary for banditry to exist.²¹

Consolidation of the bandit under the generic label of “criminal” or “thief,” however, creates an unintentional paradox. By reducing banditry to history, it reifies the significance of the *myth* of the bandit coalesced in the fables and songs circulated amongst the peasantry. The extinction of the bandit by modernity frees the exaltation of this figure from hypocrisy. Given that the real activities of bandits—violence, intimidation, and destruction of property—are admonished by all social strata, the end of their actual existence empowers legend that can frame them as heroic defenders of the people, resisters of tyranny, and redistributors of wealth. The bandit’s evolution to a purely symbolic level complicated the idealist portrait of postwar development. On the one hand, it suggested that the emergence of the new “Italy” involved the silencing of certain groups. On the other, the popular return of the bandit in the spaghetti westerns reinserted the social and political functionality of myth into imaginations of the modern

nation—a state of progress supposedly defined by its elimination of folklore and superstition as bases of acceptable world views.

In *Banditi a Orgosolo*, De Seta portrays banditry as far from extinct in 1960s Italy. Shot on location in Sardinia with nonprofessional actors drawn from the local population, the film is a quasidocumentary depiction of the agrarian/feudal economy of shepherdry and the social conditions that impel ordinary people to resort to aggravated robbery [Fig. 6.2]. The story centers on Michele, whose humble herding life is disrupted by his wrongful implication in a crime. Michele witnesses a group of bandits hiding some stolen hogs in a barn. When the authorities come to question him, they are ambushed by the bandits and Michele is accused of being complicit in the theft and the murder of one of the officers. Notably, these lawmen are not local police but *carabinieri*, who are “always portrayed as an occupation force sent by a distant colonial government from the mainland.”²² The shepherd’s similar distrust of local law enforcement and the legal system discourage him from turning himself in and awaiting a fair trial.

Michele chooses to flee into the hills with his flock (since he has not repaid the loan used to purchase the sheep). Unfortunately, the animals all die from exhaustion and starvation, and Michele is forced into banditry in order to save himself from the *carabinieri* and the bank. After returning to his village and experiencing the intensified hardship faced by his family, Michele steals a fellow shepherd’s flock at gunpoint. In the final sequence, the once honest shepherd is shown driving the stolen sheep across a plain as the victim calls him “a bandit.”

Allusions to neorealism in *Banditi a Orgosolo* are clear. Whereas the “victim-into-perpetrator” transformation mirrors the plotline of *Ladri di biciclette*, the demonstration of



Figure 6.2. *Banditi a Orgosolo*, 1960. Shepherds in rural Sardinia—one of the few places in 1960s Europe where banditry still existed.

economic conditions dictating social behavior evokes the message of *La terra trema*. The setting of Sardinia is particularly important, for as Hobsbawn has indicated, it was one of the few places in all of Europe where banditry still existed in the 1960s.²³ The film effectively “naturalizes the process of becoming a bandit” by suggesting that theft is a rational tactic of survival for those devoid of economic opportunity.²⁴ Although this seems obvious and not necessarily specific to rural areas, De Seta repositions banditry from an historic and mythic attribute of peasant society to a contemporarily viable response to the geographic exclusiveness of postwar growth.

Whereas *Banditi a Orgosolo* addresses the persistence of the socioeconomic conditions that enable banditry, *Salvatore Giuliano* focuses on the circumstances that bring about its demise. This latter film unfolds as an investigative docudrama. Through flashbacks and reenactments, Rosi stitches together the events leading up to the murder of Salvatore Giuliano, a man hailed as “the last bandit” in all of Italy. Giuliano was a Sicilian criminal who played a violent role in the island’s independence movement following World War II. Blamed for the 1947 May Day bombing that killed several communist supporters, he spent the next three years on the run before his assassination in 1950 at the age of twenty-eight. Official accounts asserted that the *carabinieri* had killed him, but Giuliano’s lieutenant, Gaspare Pisciotta, later claimed that he was responsible. When Pisciotta was killed in prison in 1954, it became clear that the police and the *mafia* had colluded in Giuliano’s case “to eliminate a man who had become embarrassing to everyone.”²⁵

In presenting these “facts,” Rosi inverts the typical outline of the bandit story. Instead of following the rise and fall of the title character, the film begins with Giuliano already dead [Fig.6.3]. This directional decision renders the audience’s engagement with Giuliano and his story entirely dependent upon legend. In this way, Rosi problematizes the interpretation



Figure 6.3. *Salvatore Giuliano*, 1962. The death of the “last bandit in Italy”—the moment that empowers the legend over reality.

of historical evidence by positing it as a myth unto its own. Giuliano's identification as a Robin Hood figure and antiestablishment hero is no less valid than official depictions of him as a terrorist and criminal. This is because (as the film uncovers) officials grossly exaggerated the latter identities in order to obscure that the real bandit was a pawn manipulated by the *carabinieri* (to quell the Sicilian independence movement) and the *mafia* (to scare people into accepting their protection services). Thus, Giuliano is reimagined as *victim* of a corrupt social and political order, his fate symbolizing that of the subproletariat in general: utilized by the hegemonic forces of modernity until no longer necessary, then liquidated to history.

The Last Frontier: Spaghetti Westerns and the Myth of National Unity

Ironically, the decline of the peplum was influenced greatly by industrial mechanisms that this genre's success had established. The international fortune garnered by Sergio Leone's film, *Per un pugno di dollari* (A Fistful of Dollars, 1964), initiated an immediate and fullscale transition in production from the mythological epic to the western. Although roughly twenty-five Italian westerns were made prior to it, the unprecedented success of *Per un pugno di dollari* marked the arrival of the genre that would dominate the domestic box-office for nearly a decade.²⁶ Between 1964 and 1976, over four hundred spaghetti westerns were made, a number that easily enshrines this genre as the most prolific of the *filoni* (formula films) during the 1960s and 1970s. The fact that at least two western films occupied the top ten in domestic box-office revenue every year from 1965 to 1971 similarly attests to the remarkable longevity and popularity of the genre.²⁷

Spaghetti westerns flourished in large part through repetition of the production and distribution framework established by the peplum. The reuse of costumes, props, extras,

directors, and sets in Spain and southern Italy allowed films to be made quickly and inexpensively. The western theme also proved a logical choice given the extraordinary degree of American financing for *filoni*. It offered the possibility of exploiting the U. S. market during a downturn in Hollywood production and capitalized on the popularity of American westerns from the 1950s that were circulating in the *terza visione* in the early 1960s. This partly explains initial attempts to pass off Italian westerns as authentic American products. Italian directors, actors, scriptwriters, music composer, and cinematographers disguised their identities with American pseudonyms, and numerous films, although shot in Italian, were dubbed in English, with subtitles or redubbing added for the domestic audience.²⁸

Spaghetthis followed the peplum model in two other important ways. They usually cast at least one recognizable American actor. Although Clint Eastwood is the best-known example, thanks to his starring role in Leone's *Man with No Name* trilogy, the star list included Henry Fonda, Lee Van Cleef, James Coburn, William Holden, and Rod Steiger.²⁹ The westerns also promoted serial characters in the same vein as Maciste and Hercules. Django, Ringo, Sabata, Sartana, and Trinity were popular and replicated protagonists. As in the pepla, once the character's appeal was confirmed, an assembly-line production of unsanctioned knock-offs ensued, with multiple actors assuming the title role. This trend was epitomized by Sergio Corbucci's *Django* (1966). An international sensation, this film led several production companies to retitle their pictures as Django products abroad, even though they did not include the character whatsoever.

Industrial/economic functionality, however, is insufficient explanation of the spaghetti western phenomenon. So is the combined "pulp distractions/unsophisticated audience" argument for explaining why the genre was the overwhelming favorite in the South. Even though eighty

percent of domestic revenue earned by spaghetti westerns between 1964 and 1976 was generated from the Mezzogiorno, to claim this statistic as evidence of “blind consumerism” is erroneous, for southerners clearly chose these films over other *filoni* of the 1960s, such as spy intrigues, shockumentaries, police dramas, horror, and “sexy” films.³⁰ As Lino Micciché has postulated, the supplanting of the peplum by the western in the South coincided with a specific moment in Italian history—the abrupt end of the economic miracle:

The great expectations and the grand illusions of the early years of the decade were replaced by new frustrations and fresh delusions. . . . So it is that the Italian Westerner, far from reflecting the somewhat “mystificatory” epic of the frontier, impersonates, in ways which are paradoxically entertaining (and too explicitly cynical to trouble the conscience) a commonplace of the everyday psyche of the “average” Italian—the urge to overwhelm (or to help someone else do it for you) in order to not be overwhelmed, the urge to guarantee that you will not become anyone’s victim (using the only objectively recognizable “values”—money and power, which go hand in hand).³¹

Paolella framed this transition as a sign of Italians “growing up,” in terms of their social and political consciousness and awareness of the semiotic and ideological devices of mass media. Paraphrasing Paolella, Frayling has stated:

Whereas the epic catered for “infantile tastes” (the hero copes with a variety of obstacles by sheer muscle, he represents a force for “good,” and he does not have to rely on cunning or technology), the Western caters for “adolescent” tastes (the hero copes with a variety of obstacles by guile and “technique,” he is working for himself, and he must learn to dominate his instincts or he will be taken for a “sucker”).³²

Paolella aligned this individual growth with what he saw as political progress—namely, a push to the left demonstrated by the election of a Socialist president in 1964, the formation of a moderate-left coalition government, and a rise in Communist voting strength that began mid-decade, particularly in the Northwest “industrial triangle” and the South as a whole.³³ He surmised that this political transformation was met by a similar maturation in engagement with

cinematic iconography and the ideological messages that underlay visual spectacle. To Paoletta, the success of spaghetti westerns in the South attested to a conscious identification by southerners with the genre's dissentious symbolism, and with its ability to simultaneously critique American economic and military imperialism and Christian Democratic hegemony, which relied so heavily on the model set by the former. This explanation clearly contextualizes the spaghetti western phenomenon as an embodiment of the southern experiences with modernization and nation-building instead of simply being a popular, aesthetic parody of Hollywood westerns.

Tropes of Subversion: The Formalist Analysis

Before continuing with contextual analysis of the spaghetti western, it is important to outline the basic components of the formalist approach, which has dominated critical discussion pertaining to the genre's affect and influence. Although this framework reduces considerations of spaghetti westerns to the purely cinematic, rendering it susceptible to semiotic abstraction and film theory esotericism, it does elucidate the artistic methods used within the genre to invert the standardized tropes of the American variant. This recognition of aesthetic revisions informs an understanding of the genre's Italian-specific content and ideological arguments.

In his book, *Sixguns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western*, Will Wright defined Hollywood Westerns as falling within four basic plot structures: the classical, transitional, vengeance, and professional. Whereas Wright recognized that the professional plot developed as a response to European westerns, he considered the transitional and vengeance narratives to be variations (more than distinct formulas) of the classical plot, which stands as "the prototype of all Westerns, the one people think of when they say 'All Westerns are alike'."³⁴ The classical

western dominated from the silent era of the 1910s to 1955 and thus established the visual, symbolic, and ideological codes of the entire genre. Although the “traditional” western is most often associated with the films of John Ford, Wright considers *Shane* (1953), by George Stevens, to be the apotheosis of the formula. Notwithstanding the great degree of variation within the classical plot, the typical storyline centers on “the lone stranger who rides into a troubled town and cleans it up, winning the respect of the townsfolk and the love of the schoolmarm.”³⁵

Whereas the classical formula is based on binary oppositions—insider/outsider, good/bad, strong/weak, moral/amoral, and wilderness/civilization—that clearly posit “right” as overcoming “wrong,” such identifications are rendered problematic in the spaghetti westerns. Building upon Wright’s classification, Frayling has divided the Italian inversion of the classical plot into three phases: foundational (1964-1967), transitional (1966-1968), and Zapata-spaghetti (1967-1971).³⁶ In the first two phases, the setting remains the American West of the late 1800s, and the films attempt an authentic presentation of life on the frontier by utilizing the same visual codes (e.g. landscape, clothing, technology) of their American predecessors. The difference lies in the alteration of binarisms. The oppositions at work in the spaghetti westerns are more appropriately identified as victim/executioner, gringo/Mexican, profaction/antifaction, family-oriented/self-oriented, amity/enmity, and money/commitment to a cause.³⁷ Sanctimonious treatment of the conquest of savagery and taming of the wilderness is eschewed in favor of a pessimistic assessment of the onset of civilization as bound by violence and corruption. The question in the classical western, of whether the hero can successfully liberate the townspeople from the tyranny of outlaws and Indians and thereby enable the expansion of democracy and American values, is reworked in the spaghetti westerns. It becomes whether the townspeople are

worthy of saving in the first place, as idealist conceptions that equate modernization with freedom, equality, and progress are scrutinized.

Spaghetti westerns often countered the romantic envisionment of the frontier legacy through parody, pastiche, and symbolic inversion of the Hollywood standard. Leone's film, *C'era una volta il West* (Once Upon a Time in the West, 1968), epitomizes this revision. Set in the fictional town of Sweetwater, the story focuses on a series of conflicts that develop between five main characters: Jill, a young woman looking to escape from her past in New Orleans; Cheyenne, an aging gun-for-hire; Harmonica, a mysterious outlaw; Mr. Morton, an unscrupulous railroad tycoon; and Frank, a sadistic hitman hired to protect the railroad's interests. The interplay of the characters centers on the arrival of the railroad and the battle for control of resources. Having secured the land where the refueling depot is to be built, Jill becomes the target of Mr. Morton and Frank, who resort to violence, intimidation, and murder in order to maintain the company's monopolistic grip. Cheyenne and Harmonica join forces to defend Jill, but their motivations are based on personal satisfaction rather than an altruistic defense of the oppressed. Cheyenne wants to win Jill's affection and Harmonica seeks revenge on Frank, who murdered his family when Harmonica was a child. The film's resolution is more ambivalent than optimistic. Harmonica kills Frank and Cheyenne is killed by Mr. Morton, who is severely wounded and left for dead. Jill succeeds in securing the depot yet, as a solitary woman on the frontier, her future is far from secure.

In contrast to classical westerns, the coming of civilization in *C'era una volta il West* is hardly celebratory. For Leone, the railroad is a harbinger of death and social destruction. As much as its arrival symbolically marks the end of the wild, lawless, and primitive West, the railroad also brings with it the real and negative characteristics of economic disenfranchisement,

political corruption, and violence endemic to eastern cities. Leone's method of contaminating the traditional, mythic view of progress involves an exhaustive repetition and revision of visual Hollywood icons. Frayling and Oreste De Fornari, among others, have identified over one hundred visual references to classical westerns in *C'era una volta il West*.³⁸ The opening sequence showing two men waiting for the train to arrive carrying Harmonica exemplifies Leone's tactic. The would-be assassins are played by Jack Elam and Woody Strode—two of the most familiar character actors of American westerns. When the train finally comes, Harmonica gets off and, after a brief confrontation, shoots the men, who then vanish from the story altogether. The sequence is an obvious reference to *High Noon* (1952) [Fig. 6.4]. In the first five minutes of the film, Leone effectively “tantalized his audience with familiar Western faces, then removed them after they have served their purpose as iconographical representations of a familiar genre which he is in the act of transforming.”³⁹ Throughout *C'era una volta il West*, the establishment of an *apparent* authenticity defines Leone's attempts to “deconstruct one mythology and reconstruct another: to demythologize, rather than demythicise.”⁴⁰

C'era una volta il West also contains one of the most common revisions made by spaghetti western directors: the casting of American actors against type. The role of cold-blooded killer Frank was played by Henry Fonda, best known in the realm of westerns as John Ford's heroic Wyatt Earp in *My Darling Clementine* (1946). In another reversal, Charles Bronson, who was one of the gunfighters that defended a Mexican village from bandits in *The Magnificent Seven* (1960), played the self-serving outlaw Harmonica. The most renowned example, of course, is Leone's use of Clint Eastwood as “The Man with No Name.” Until his appearance in *Per un pugno di dollari*, Eastwood was identified with the character Rowdy Yates from the



Figure 6.4. *C'era una volta il West*, 1968. Leone's reference to *High Noon* (1952) initiates his revision of the classical western genre.

television series, *Rawhide*. Initially a hot-headed, second-hand man, Rowdy became a noble problem-solver and dispenser of justice on the open range, eventually maturing in the series to trail boss and exemplar of civility. His performance as the nameless loner in Leone's trilogy turned his previous persona on its head and served as the template for subsequent antiheroes in the Italian films.

By casting against type, Italian directors were able to complicate viewer's expectations of good and bad and, as a consequence, bring into question the validity of their moral judgments. The archetypes of heroism established in the American versions were put in peril by the suggestion that the "righteous cause" they fought for was only of value to those who accepted a particular ideology based on Manifest Destiny, racial superiority, and economic expansionism. The rise of the antihero in spaghetti westerns signals a transformation toward moral and ethical ambiguity by presenting protagonists as socially flawed, self-centered, money-hungry outlaws, bandits, and bounty hunters. Importantly, the antihero exists outside of society and has little interest in participating in the march of civilization. His "heroic" qualities are his prowess with a gun, resistance to assimilation, and defiance of the politically and economically powerful. In general, the antihero's only weakness is his thirst for "a fistful of dollars."

Perhaps the greatest revision made by spaghetti westerns is the insertion of Marxist ideology into the genre. Following the model set by Sergio Sollima's film, *La resa dei conti* (The Big Gundown, 1966), a series of Italian westerns entertained the relationship between bandits and peasant communities, the appropriateness of violence in the struggle against political subjugation, and the possibility of subproletarian hegemony. These "Zapata-spaghettis" relocated the action from the American West of the late 1800s to Mexico during the revolution of 1910-1920.⁴¹ They generally centered on two protagonists: a "Mexican peasant or bandit who is or

becomes a revolutionary,” and an American or European hired-gun “who opposes or assists the Mexican.”⁴² More often than not, the gringo is a counterinsurgent mercenary hired by either the Mexican government (of Porfirio Diaz, Francisco Madero, and Victoriano Huerta) or U. S. forces, including industrial capitalists and the military.

The interaction between the outsider and his Mexican counterpart produces one of three possible outcomes: The soldier of fortune stays true to his original goal and undermines the revolution, as in *Quién sabe?* (A Bullet for the General, 1967); he severs ties with the bandit but maintains respect for his cause, as in *La resa dei conti*; or he abandons his own interests altogether and joins the revolution, as in *Vamos a matar, compañeros* (Compañeros, 1970). Regardless of which conclusion occurs, the ideological stance of the Zapata westerns clearly situates the revolutionaries as fighters for the righteous cause. In so doing, the political variants of the spaghetti western elaborate an acute criticism of American interventionism while also presenting the Mexican revolution as an historical inspiration for contemporary southern Italians desirous of land reform, equal representation, and internally defined inclusion into the nation.

Where South and West Collide: Resonance and Resistance at the Edge of Modernity

In a sense, Italian revision of the myths of the American West represents a unique form of time-space compression. Perhaps a more appropriate description would be the *convergence* of time-space *compressions*, for these developments within cinematic space do not necessarily reflect the conceptual imperatives and material implications of “the annihilation of space by time” imagined by Karl Marx and elaborated upon by David Harvey.⁴³ What the spaghetti western genre does embody is collision of the two most-often-cited epochs of time-space compression—“the middle of the nineteenth century to the outbreak of the First World War, and

again towards the end of the twentieth century”—in which there occurred “a radical restructuring in the nature and experience of both time and space.”⁴⁴ If the first period marks the transition from premodern to modern, and the second signals the movement from modern to postmodern, then scrutinization of nineteenth-century nationalist constructs within spaghetti westerns bears remarkable relevance to the postwar Italian South. For the South of the 1960s can be understood as an inbetween space historically and ideologically—one largely excluded from the processes of modernity, but in the act of direct transformation from premodern to postmodern.

Deconstructions of the foundational myths of modern America certainly can be read as indictments of modernity. What many spaghetti westerns imagine is an alternate history, one in which Jeffersonian populism prevails over Rooseveltian progressivism. Whereas the traditional western heralds the supremacy of corporate economy and managerial politics, the Italian version theorizes unity through agrarianism, economic individualism, and social mobility. In the progressive view, transformation of the frontier is an economic gain; in the populist conception, the same transformation amounts to an historical break. As Richard Slotkin has noted, the populist vision “defines the crisis of modernization as a loss of the democratic social organization, the equitable distribution of wealth, and political power of the agrarian past.”⁴⁵ The creation of the antihero instills the populist ideal with modern realism, for his “urge to overwhelm, in order to not be overwhelmed” is a preemptive form of resistance that acknowledges the hegemonic position of industrial capitalism and centralized governance.

As a defender of agrarian democracy and the producing classes, the bandit/outlaw antihero of the spaghetti western provides viewers who identify with him the ability to “indulge sentiments of resentment and rebellion without having to adopt a radically alienating stance toward society and its traditional ideology.”⁴⁶ Inasmuch as the antihero’s personal motivations

suggest a corruptive and amoral influence of the “almighty dollar,” the causes that he is enticed to fight for (at least temporarily) are those that reinforce defining characteristics of southern society. Luigi Barzini has intimated that the underlying intent of spaghetti westerns was to reassure southerners that *campanilismo* (allegiance to local social bonds) remained a rational response to “the colonialist maneuverings of northern capital.”⁴⁷ This relates to Slotkin’s suggestion that the nation-building process, as configured according to frontier myth, involved the liquidation of oppositional groups: “If modernization on the Americanist plan represents the only valid path to historical progress, resistance to that model is equivalent to an attempt to reverse the course of history.”⁴⁸ The parallels drawn between the Italian South of the 1960s and the historic American West suggest neither an antimodern mindset nor a southern penchant for an historically regressive form of progress.

The displacement of time and place to revolutionary Mexico in the Zapata westerns provided heightened allegorical relevance for the contemporary South, especially in light of emerging discussions of the region as a postcolonial space.⁴⁹ The focus on land ownership by the peasantry, a central issue of the Mexican Revolution, “bore some similarity with the problems of a predominantly agricultural, underdeveloped and impoverished Southern Italy,” while the struggle for economic and political self-determination mirrored southern resentment of northern *profittatori* (carpetbaggers) in regional positions of government.⁵⁰ Directors Sergio Sollima and Damiano Damiani intended for their Zapata films to “be read as parables about the relationship between the Third World (represented by ‘Mexico’) and the capitalist countries of the West (represented by the ‘outsider’).” To Sollima in particular, the Mexican bandit-hero symbolized the emancipatory desires of the Italian South, while the Anglo mercenary embodied the predatory will of the Italian North.⁵¹

Günsberg has suggested that the metaphorical correlation between Mexico and the Italian South alludes to the divergent racial associations of the regions that date back to the Risorgimento.⁵² As neither black nor white, Mexicans represent an inbetweenness that resonates with southern Italians who historically have been imagined as occupying a middle ground between Europeans and Africans. Whereas northern Italians identify themselves ethnically and culturally with Northern Europe, southerners share with their Mexican counterparts a Mediterranean heritage. Just as Mexicans are the predominant Other of the U. S., and their presence across the border has been conjured as a threat to the purity of Anglo-Saxon identity, southern Italians have been framed as the greatest contaminating force confronting the North. This xenophobic rhetoric was particularly strong during the massive migration of southerners to northern cities in the 1950s and early 1960s.

One of the best Zapata-spaghetti illustrations of the Othering of the peasantry is the opening sequence of Leone's last western, *Giù la testa* (A Fistful of Dynamite, 1971).⁵³ This is somewhat ironic since Leone intended the film to be a critique of the political westerns that had come to dominate the genre after 1967. Nevertheless, the first third of the film is more summation than parody of the subgenre. *Giù la testa* opens with a quotation from Mao Tse-tung that foreshadows the excessive carnage that ensues: "The revolution is not a social dinner, a literary event, a drawing or an embroidery; it cannot be done with elegance and courtesy. The revolution is an act of violence." The film then introduces the protagonist, Juan, a barefoot and disheveled peasant who negotiates a ride on a passing stagecoach. The driver of the coach agrees to transport Juan not out of compassion, but out of spite for the patrons he is escorting, who he knows will be uncomfortable with the Mexican's presence. The aristocrats, businessmen, and priest react with expected abhorrence before debating the worth of the peasantry as a whole in

front of Juan. They equate peasants with animals in need of taming and express revulsion toward their imagined practices of incest and bestiality. One man chastises peasant revolutionaries for trying to take away land from “civilized” peoples while another speculates that these “unfortunate brutes living in promiscuous heaps like rats in a sewer” will infest humanity if not kept in check. Instead of challenging these claims, Juan sits in silence until his six sons and their cohorts, as per the plan all along, ambush the stagecoach and subsequently kill or humiliate the prejudiced passengers [Fig. 6.5].

In the stagecoach sequence, Leone juxtaposes shots of Juan listening stoically with extreme close-ups of the affluent characters eating gluttonously. Whereas these images portray hedonistic consumption as a bourgeois vice, they also insinuate the hypocrisy of the upper classes in stereotyping the peasantry as slovenly and piggish. Juan is the subject of the conversation, but he is visually framed as observer instead of object. His silence ultimately marks his understanding that no civility exists amongst the civilized, words are of no use in the fight for equality, and violence is the only persuasive argument of the oppressed.

Insomuch as *C’era una volta il West* stands as a survey of the ideological devices of the traditional western, *Giù la testa* catalogues the predominant themes of the Zapata variants. As Frayling has noted, these include:

The decadence of provincial military governors; the weakness of local administrations; a graphic presentation of the plight of the “wretched of the Earth;” the difficulties of setting up a postcolonial regime; the need to believe in a “social bandit,” often seen as an indicator of a community’s state of consciousness; a detailed presentation of violent counterinsurgency measures; and a strong streak of antimilitarism or anticlericalism.⁵⁴



Figure 6.5. *Giù la testa*, 1971. Violence is the only rational response of the peasantry to oppression.

Leone's desire for *Giù la testa* to be read as a parody of the Zapata subgenre acknowledges the director's criticism of political westerns as parochial diversions.⁵⁵ Other critics, particularly those on the political left, echoed Leone's concerns by suggesting that the injection of a "discourse on revolution" into a popular genre "anaesthetized genuine revolutionary commitment." The Marxist film critic, Pierre Baudry, alleged that this resulted from the political westerns being produced *within* the industrial-capital framework of Cinecittà, which sanitized radicalism by prioritizing profit over content. Baudry also claimed that attempts to debase the hegemony of the U. S. by reworking the symbolic tropes of the American western created a dangerous situation where "a colonial ideology is being used to criticize a colonial reality. . . and in the end, all we get is a repetition of nineteenth-century stereotypes (the dignified poor and the immoral rich)."⁵⁶ James Roy MacBean has offered similar skepticism concerning the ability of the political western to inspire action:

These films are useful in stirring up emotional support and sympathy for the revolutionary cause, as well as in stirring up a healthy sense of revolutionary outrage at the paramilitary machinations the ruling class uses to maintain its power and privileges. . . . But, if revolution is to be truly liberating, it must be much more than just the emotional revenge of the oppressed.⁵⁷

The critical consensus, therefore, casts doubt on the capacity of popular genre cinema to raise political consciousness, since the tactics of subverting the status quo are perceived to reify "the bourgeois concept of representation" in mimicking the visual and narrative codes that establish an "authoritarian relationship between film and audience."⁵⁸

Perhaps it was of some relief to the critics when the focus of the Italian western transitioned from revolutionary politics to comedy in the twilight of the genre's popularity. The most successful comic westerns were the "Trinity" films made by Enzo Barboni, starring

Terence Hill and Bud Spencer as the “Abbott and Costello” of the West. In the series, the duo aimlessly roams the frontier, inadvertently caught in situations of mistaken identity and farcical conflicts between gullible townspeople and inept villains. A litany of physical gags, elaborate stunts, and absurd caricatures determines the story, not political allusion. Gunfights are transformed into slapfights and barroom brawls take precedence over shootouts. When bullets are fired, the preposterous marksmanship and trick-shooting depicted effectively sanitizes the use of violence by stretching the level of credibility.⁵⁹ Remarkably, . . . *continuavano a chiamarlo Trinità* (Trinity is STILL My Name!, 1971), the sequel to *Lo chiamavano Trinità* (They Call Me Trinity, 1970), grossed more money in Italy than any previous film—a testament to the picture’s exceptional appeal to demographics beyond the typical southern, male viewer of the genre’s predecessors.⁶⁰

The financial success of comic westerns is often taken to imply a devolution of the spaghetti western genre from critical cinema to pulp distraction and, by extension, confirmation of the claim that popular media precludes subversive politics. Alternately, the comic western’s popularity can be explained as a recurrence of the same transformation that befell neorealism in the early 1950s. Then, audiences grew weary of seeing the starkness of their everyday lives reinforced on screen and began to favor the light-hearted “pink” neorealism variants. Perhaps the ever-escalating and grotesque violence of the Zapata westerns similarly reflected too much the everyday realities of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The student riots of 1968 initiated a decade-long episode of violence and political terrorism that erupted throughout the peninsula. Known in retrospect as *gli anni di piombo* (The Years of Lead), the period was characterized by widespread political assassinations and public bombings conducted by forces of the far left, the far right, organized crime syndicates, and covert paramilitary forces.⁶¹

Regardless of one's conclusions about the anaesthetizing influence of mass media on contestatory ideologies, the affect of spaghetti westerns cannot be denied. At the very least, this genre illustrated the possibilities of confronting dominant forms of representation from the inside. Whether the genre's revolutionary themes and violence inspired real action or simply reflected the sociopolitical antagonisms of the time is, ultimately, a question of little use. More important is recognition of the ways that popular, mass media is *made* political and imbricated in discussions of identity and equality.

Aware of the theoretical difficulties surrounding the politicization of popular culture, Gillo Pontecorvo, director of the acclaimed film, *La battaglia di Algeri* (The Battle of Algiers, 1996), defended the tactic:

Cinema can be a way of revitalizing a people's deadened responses. We have been conditioned to absorb a false vision of reality that is dominated by the tastes, morals, and perceptions of the "establishment." To forego the possibility of opposing the *fictions* diffused by this establishment is in the least irresponsible. That is why I believe in a cinema which addresses itself to the masses and not a cinema *d'élite* for an elite.⁶²

Chapter 7

Boundaries: New Regionalisms and the Limits of the Cinematic Nation

The student revolts of 1968 and the subsequent factory-worker strikes of 1969 initiated a period of prolonged instability in Italy.¹ Dissatisfaction related to the slowness of social and political reforms (compared to the rapidity of postwar industrial development) signaled an underlying crisis in values, in which “everything that was certain in the past made it difficult to define the present and impossible to locate the future.”² After twenty years of extraordinary economic growth, modernization, and centralization, Republican Italy had apparently reached an impasse. Idealist visions of a progression from wartime ruin to a position of international prominence were challenged by public exposure of the nefarious and disintegrative means utilized to achieve such ends. As Paul Ginsborg has summarized, the holes opened in the ideological fabric of both the right and left resulted in nothing short of chaos:

There were major inquiries into police infiltration of political parties, and into corrupt use of public funds or “clientelism.” Terrorism was becoming fashionable. Socialist parties could not make up their minds whether, or on what terms, to go into alliance with Christian Democrats: the Italian road to socialism seemed to be leading nowhere. Meanwhile, neo-Fascist and far-left groups were constantly in the news. Industrial and student unrest drew attention to the fact that the “economic miracle” had not led to much needed social reforms, which were often blocked by the representatives of big business. The Vatican opposed any liberalization of the divorce laws. For seven months in 1969, there was no credible government in power. Disillusionment with the parliamentary process was growing.³

Out of this backdrop, a *strategia della tensione* (strategy of tension) arose in the 1970s characterized by widespread violence and revolt. New, issue-based voting blocs, including feminists, environmentalists, labor unions, neofascists, reactionary Catholics, and Maoist

revolutionaries, sought to obtain political representation and legislative reforms, often without aligning themselves with the traditional parties.

In the first half of the 1970s, the Christian Democratic Party (DC) and the Communist Party (PCI) maintained their political dominance by cleaving votes away from the new movements, primarily through clientelism, exchange voting, and guarantees of public financial support. The nationalizing regime in postwar politics that had begun in 1963 reached its apex in 1976, when the DC and PCI accounted for a record seventy-three percent of the national vote.⁴ However, as soon as this phase peaked, it abruptly ended. By 1980, the inability of the DC and PCI to represent the interests of far left and far right reformist groups culminated in major losses in national elections. Support shifted rapidly to the smaller Republican Party (PRI), Socialist Party (PSI), Radical Party (PR), Proletarian Democracy (DP), Social Movement (MSI), and others.

Although influenced by an inability of the major parties to follow through with promised reforms, the localization of political patronage was also a response to social and economic alterations that emerged in the 1970s. The international recession of 1973-1974 inspired a transition from neocapitalism to neoliberalism, symbolized by a push to reduce federal debt and expenditures by privatizing public services and industry and decentralizing government. The emergence of globalized financial, transportation, and communications networks fostered reterritorializations of place that brought into question the primacy of the nation-state.⁵

Related to the changes in political party power and economic policy of the 1970s, three specific occurrences would greatly reduce both the role of cinema in cultural struggles to define the nation and the relevance of the South as the primary hindrance to Italian nationalism. The

first of these was the displacement of cinema by television as the most popular medium. Second was the devolution of power to the twenty administrative regions and the subsequent rise of the “Third Italy.” Finally, came a proposed “Historic Compromise” between the DC and the PCI. I will discuss each of these in turn.

The End of an Era: Crises in Cinema, Regionalism, and Ideology

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, cinema consumption superseded that of all other mass media (e.g. radio, print, and television) combined. In the 1960s, Italians “went to the cinema more often—per week, per adult—than any other audiences in the world.”⁶ In 1965, forty-nine percent of families owned a television set and only two channels were in operation, both run by the State company, RAI. Television was initially considered *il cinema dei poveri* (the cinema of the poor) in reference both to its “free” cost and to a viewership pattern involving groups gathered around a solitary set in a local bar, church, or community center.⁷ By 1975, however, television-set ownership had reached ninety-two percent of households. This growth included an extraordinary increase in the South. Whereas in 1965, less than twenty-seven percent of southern families owned their own set, by 1975 this number had reached eight-five percent.⁸

From its inception in 1954 until 1976, television existed mostly as the central mass-media platform for the DC and the Catholic Church. The DC maintained control of government during this period, and even though RAI sold airtime to advertisers, the DC managed to discriminate against potential buyers. A potent example involved the refusal of airtime for automobile companies other than FIAT, since the largest Italian manufacture did not want competitors’ cars to be shown to the public. To find contestatory viewpoints, the public continued to rely on cinema.

In 1975, however, the regulatory structure of RAI was changed and the main control of programming and advertising boards moved from the government to parliament. Other major developments quickly followed. In 1972, the Constitutional Court allowed private-sector radio and television programs at the local level. Three years later, RAI began broadcasting a third channel devoted to local and regional news programs. By 1980, hundreds of local radio and television stations had developed throughout the country. Importantly though, cable television was still forbidden, so RAI was able to preserve its monopoly over national broadcasts.

In the 1980s, Silvio Berlusconi and his company Fininvest created a private network of three regional channels (e.g. Canale 5, Italia 1, and Rete 4) that successfully competed with RAI for audience shares. This success, which eventually fostered the evolution of the channels from local to national, was indebted to the restrictive advertising policies of RAI. The rise of private television finally allowed the large number of consumer-product-based companies that had emerged in the 1960s and 1970s the means to reach all corners of the domestic market with their advertising.⁹ In less than a decade after deregulation, television had become in Italy what it is today: the most profitable, pervasive, and popular visual medium.

The ability of the cinema industry to compete with television was doomed for numerous reasons, all essentially financial. The exponential costs of producing films compared to television shows led many directors to make projects directly for the small screen. Television also reduced pressures to make profitable films since, in contrast to big-screen productions that derived their entire returns from ticket sales and distribution fees, responsibility for a television network's bottom-line was split among dozens of programs and their overall capacity to generate competition among advertisers. The economic crisis initiated by the 1973-1974 recession crippled the cinema industry, given its dependence on large sums of credit, consumers with

disposable income, and the largest possible number of theater screens. The dire financial situation of the 1970s forced over three thousand theaters (predominantly of the *terza visione* variety) to close. Plummeting attendance and reduction in international investment limited both the number and scope of films being made. After a twenty-year period in which Italian films maintained most of domestic box-office revenue, American movies had regained their position of dominance by the early 1980s, accounting for approximately eighty percent of the Italian market share.¹⁰

As the last cohesive and popular genre of the postwar period to tackle issues of social and political representation imbricated in struggles to define the modern nation, spaghetti westerns appropriately reflected the irreversible transition from cinema to television. The success of the spaghetti western in the early 1970s, when television viewership was rapidly supplanting theater attendance, can be explained in part by the genre's similarities to small-screen productions. The serial tendencies—exemplified by the repetition of protagonists and their personalized problem-solving techniques in ever-changing situations and locations—mirrored the narrative formula of popular television programs. Dispelling audience expectations from film to film overrode concerns for production value, authenticity, and directorial artistry that distinguished cinema, at least superficially, from television. Based on subject matter and marketing strategies, spaghetti westerns also masqueraded as American products akin to the imported television programs from the United States that were beginning to be broadcast by RAI in the late 1960s.

The internal transition of the genre from the politically charged Zapata variant to the comic western can be viewed as symptomatic of television's "victory" over cinema. The replacement of pistols with open fists and of revolutionary ideology with slapstick humor harbored a symbolic equivalence to the end of cinema "as the most powerful weapon."¹¹ The

abrupt decline in the medium's force and influence also had a very real effect on theorizations of nationalism, for "just at the moment when we are able to detect a nationwide acculturation taking place as a result of Italian cinema reaching all classes and areas," the public's gaze shifted from the communal seats of local theaters to the private realm of the living room.

The extent of television's neutralization of cinema in the 1970s was matched by diminished importance of the Southern Question brought about by new administrative and conceptual regional alignments. Although the Constitution of the Italian Republic (1948) had included provisions for the granting of a degree of autonomy to the twenty regions, devolution did not occur until 1970, when the fifteen *statuto ordinario* (ordinary statute) regions were given political, legislative, and financial powers similar to those of the five previously established *statuto speciale* (special statute) regions.¹² The most common reason offered by the DC for their slowness in implementing the regional-autonomy mandates contained within the Constitution was a claim that *decentralization* was only viable after the nation had transformed the centralized framework of Fascism into a national system based on republican principles. Opponents issued a different explanation, however, suggesting that the DC prevented extension of regional powers out of fear that the PCI, which had been excluded from national government since 1948, would gain control of local and regional policy-making.

Pressured by the PSI—whose support was needed to maintain governmental majority in the late 1960s and early 1970s—the DC slowly agreed to a series of reforms that gave ever-expanding authority to the twenty regions.¹³ These were the first steps in Italy's march toward twenty-first century federalism.¹⁴ Notably, the devolution of political power allowed for a deferment of fiscal responsibility from the national to the regional level. Changes to the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* were indicative of this transfer, as substantially less money was allocated for

the organization from 1976 until 1993, when it was finally dissolved. Originally devised to carry out “extraordinary” interventions that local and regional institutions could not afford themselves, the Cassa’s focus in the mid-1970s turned from creation of a unitary industrial and agricultural framework for the South to funding for “ordinary” interventions requested by local authorities, such as road- and school-building projects.

The political rationale behind decentralization had a symbolic counterpart. Whereas devolution was viewed as a means to temper pressures from regional autonomy movements and to hold underachieving regions accountable for their own competitive economic development, it essentially amounted to an admission that national unity was culturally unviable.¹⁵ This, of course, was a principle argument underlying the historic dualism between the North and South. Ironically, decentralization of fiscal and administrative power in the 1970s emboldened new forms of entrepreneurship in the central and northeast regions that challenged the hegemony of the North and greatly disrupted longstanding macroregional divisions.

The emergence of a conceptual “Third Italy” in the late 1970s brought into question the relevance of regional dualism to postwar development. Third Italy delineated a group of regions in the northeast and center portions of the country that produced relatively high economic growth rates during a period of national stagnation [Fig. 7.1]. Their success was indebted to expansion of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SME) in a number of craft sectors—e.g. textiles, leather, ceramics, furniture, and artisanal foods—that were spatially clustered, cooperative, and capable of establishing niches in export markets.¹⁶ This model contrasted with the traditional large-firm, heavy-industry complex of the Northwest industrial triangle—an area undergoing a severe crisis in the mid-1970s owing to labor strikes, skyrocketing fuel and raw material costs, and increased competition globally and domestically from transnational corporations. By splitting the

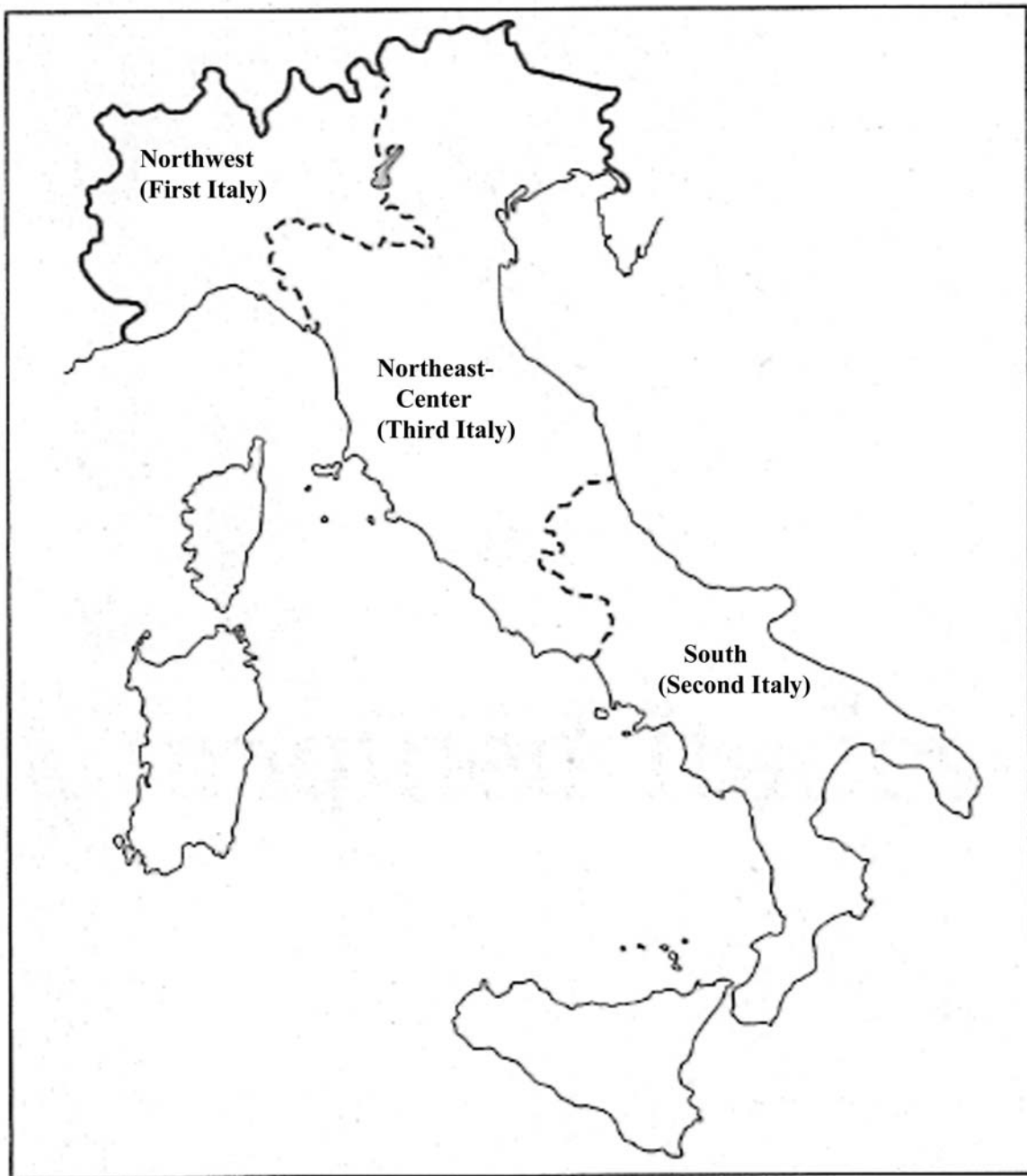


Figure 7.1. The Three Italies.

historically imagined North into two economically divergent halves, Third Italy diminished the impact of framing the South as antithetical to the modern nation. It shifted focus to the out-dated and inefficient trappings of the postwar industrial base in the Northwest. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, many southern regions imitated the SME-cluster model of Third Italy, with firms in sectors such as wine, olive oil, orchard fruits, and food processing, joining established cooperatives in the central regions.¹⁷

Interestingly, the SME model that defined Third Italy succeeded in both Catholic and Communist political strongholds. The greatest majority in national support for the DC throughout the postwar period (as a percentage of regional votes) came from *la zona bianca* in the northeast, while the PCI was firmly entrenched in the central regions that comprised *la zona rossa*.¹⁸ On the surface, this occurrence was a testament to the capacity of Third Italy's development model to accomplish what had the North and South had failed to—namely, the conciliation of the interests of capital and labor. Ideologically, this served more as a symbol of the final acquiescence of political values to the superiority of economics, which, for leftist critics, echoed a similar submission by their political leaders, embedded in the proposed *compromesso storico* (Historic Compromise) between the DC and PCI.

Based in part on the coalition agreement struck by the DC and PSI in the 1960s, the *compromesso storico* gained traction in the mid-1970s after the PCI severed its ties to the Soviet Union and embraced Eurocommunism under the leadership of Enrico Berlinguer. Fearing the loss of regional influence as a function of decentralization and recognizing its inability to contain the disruptive effects of social movements, the DC viewed an alignment with the PCI as a way to maintain its governmental majority. Following their parliamentary gains in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the PCI saw its chance to transform from a “party of struggle” to a “party of

struggle and government” and thereby to move from a position of exclusion within the *bipartitismo imperfetto* (imperfect two-party system) to one of equitable power in a *coassociativismo imperfetto* (imperfect coassociationism).¹⁹ Thinking in this way, the party distanced itself from several radical movements in order to negotiate a coalition with the DC. As Antonio Negri has stated:

The four years from 1974 to 1978 saw a progressive tightening of the alliance between the DC and the PCI: this alliance extended outwards from government and parliament to the whole system of power, from the central administration out to the periphery, to the trade unions, to the running of communications and the media and even, remarkably, to the police. However, at the same time, Italy's broadly-based social struggles were becoming more intense and the social movements broke definitively with all forms of institutional representation.²⁰

Resentment by working-class movements and Marxist revolutionaries towards what they saw as a betrayal of traditional Communist-party principles by the official leaders of the left came to a boiling point in 1978. The *Brigate Rosse* (Red Brigades)—a militant extremist group—kidnapped the former DC Prime Minister, Aldo Moro, who was one of the main figures brokering the compromise. After two months of government refusal to meet their demands, the *Brigate Rosse* killed Moro. This act officially ended attempts to create a *compromesso storico*. The PCI never recovered either. Electoral support declined amidst its failure to reestablish connections to the social movements that had been marginalized, and the party returned to its subservient position under the DC. The PCI also had become “something which in its original glorious history it had never previously been: a bureaucratic grouping, cut off from society and locked into the machinery of power.”²¹

Pasolini's Eulogy to Postwar Possibilities: *Uccellacci e uccellini*

Perhaps it is no surprise that Pier Paolo Pasolini, one of the most vocal and incendiary critics of Italian postwar development, presaged the 1970s crises of cinema, ideology, and national unity in his allegorical tale *Uccellacci e uccellini* (Hawks and Sparrows, 1966). This film unfolds as a Catholic parable within a Marxist parable. Pasolini's juxtaposition of the two main ideological currents at odds in the modern nation is played out through a series of comic encounters that ultimately highlight the pervasiveness of class antagonisms, secular progress, and political abstraction. The "outer" story centers on a father and son, Innocenti Totò and Innocenti Ninetto (Nino), who wander the outskirts of Rome. They are eventually joined by a talking crow—a Marxist intellectual who serves as Pasolini's alter ego.

When Nino asks the crow where he is from, the bird replies: "I am from far away. My country is called Ideology. My parents are Mr. Doubt and Mrs. Conscience. I live in the capital, the city of the future, on Karl Marx Street." The crow then explains his reason for conversing with the men, expounding a personal belief of Pasolini in the process: the subproletarians are "blessed" by their "innocence, simplicity, and grace." The crow wishes to follow them "along a road that no one knows," but eventually leads to "that place where all roads meet." The physical road the men traverse happens to be a loop that surrounds Rome—a real and symbolic divide between city and country. The fact that the road never enters either realm and ends where it begins clearly alludes to Dante's *Purgatorio*. As they start their walk along a freeway overpass under construction, the crow opines that "the road begins, and the journey is already over." The statement is indicative of the director's suggestion that the structural mechanisms of modernization effectively reduce the possible avenues of development to a singular, homogenizing, and capitalist path.

Pasolini cleverly comments on the disorienting effects of modernity's transformation of place by constructing a heterotopic and imagined geography. Father, son, and crow wander through streets with names derived from the realities they contain, moving from "Via Benito La Lacrima, Disoccupato," a road named after a man crying over his unemployment, to "Via Antonio Mangiapasta, Scopino," a street that "puts the food consumer on the same level as the garbage collector."²² They pass signs in the desolate outskirts that point to Istanbul and Cuba, thousands of kilometers away [Fig. 7.2]. Although these markers hint at the interconnections being created by globalization, their randomness calls into question the relevance of such associations (in terms of noneconomic factors), while the vast distances displayed extol an isolation of place symptomatic of deterritorialization.

The "inner" story is a parable told by the crow to the father and son that focuses on two Franciscan friars, Brother Ciccillo and Brother Ninetto (played by the same actors, Totò and Ninetto Davoli), who are asked by St. Francis to convert the "arrogant hawks and humble sparrows" to Catholicism [Fig. 7.3]. After a year of living amongst the hawks, Brother Ciccillo is able to learn their language and successfully convince the birds to love one another and to worship the Lord. Converting the sparrows proves to be more difficult for, as Brother Ciccillo learns, these birds communicate through gestures rather than auditory "language." The friars eventually teach the sparrows to love as well. However, on their way back to the monastery, they witness a hawk killing a sparrow. Dismayed, the friars admit to St. Francis that they were able to show the birds how to love themselves and the Lord but not each other. St. Francis implores the brothers to try again, stating:



Figure 7.2. *Uccellacci e uccellini*, 1966. Innocenti Totò and Innocenti Ninetto wander the imagined geography of the Roman periphery.



Figure 7.3. *Uccellacci e uccellini*, 1966. Brother Cicillo and Brother Ninetto attempt to learn the language of the hawks.

The world must be changed. We know that as society gradually progresses, the awareness of its imperfect composition arises, and its strident, imploring inequalities emerge, those that afflict mankind. Isn't this awareness of the inequality between classes and between nations, the most serious threat to peace?

Although the quotation imparts a Marxist slant, in actuality the words that St. Francis cites are those of Pope John XXIII. The applicability of the statement to both ideologies evinces a primary claim of Pasolini's: that Catholicism and Communism, as viable world views, are rendered equally in crisis by the socioeconomic changes wrought by modernization. In Pasolini's allegorical dialectic, the predatory hawks are an obvious symbol of the bourgeoisie and the sparrows, as their prey, signify the subproletariat.

As the action returns to the present, an intertitle reiterates the role of the crow as the Marxist counterpart to the father and son. It reads: "For anyone in doubt or not paying attention, we would like to point out that the raven is a "left-wing intellectual" of the era preceding Palmiro Togliatti's death."²³ The men continue their walk, and along the way get into a fight with a group of farmers over private property rights before stumbling into the house of a peasant woman. In this sequence, Innocenti Totò plays the part of an unsympathetic landlord demanding rent from the woman, even though it is clear she has nothing to offer, not even food. Her appearance and mannerisms, together with the soundtrack, portray the woman as Chinese. The scene is meant to invoke "the spectacle of the Third World and its exploitation by the West," but also suggests that the subproletariat has lost all sense of unity, as sparrows now prey upon other sparrows.²⁴ Totò, however, is put in his proper place in the social hierarchy when he is treated similarly by an engineer to whom he owes money.

Further down the road, the wanderers happen upon the funeral procession of Togliatti. Of course, they are nowhere near the city center where this historic event actually occurred. Pasolini inserts newsreel footage of the funeral between shots of Totò and Nino looking into the distance,

as if they were witnessing the event. In the spatial, temporal, and visual detachment from its object, their gaze constitutes a lament more than a first-hand observation. Pasolini focuses attention on Communist Party members simultaneously giving clenched-fist salutes and crossing themselves. As Peter Bondanella has proposed, “no more striking and incongruous picture could be presented of contemporary Italy’s ideological confusion than this strange mixture of Marxism and Christianity.”²⁵

At the end of the film, the crow has lectured the father and son to the point of boredom. Exasperated by their companion, the duo kills the crow and devours him along the roadside. The scene is a comic inversion of the traditional Eucharist, with the suggestion being that the “body of Marx, like that of Christ, will provide mystic nourishment for the subproletariat” on their journey to an unforeseeable place in the future.²⁶

Aesthetically, Pasolini repeatedly references cinematic works of his predecessors and contemporaries. The casting of Totò sets the tone for the entire film, for the legendary actor exudes a comic mastery akin to Charlie Chaplin. Totò’s expressions, along with numerous shots of the father and son walking along desolate roads and hopping around like birds, are direct allusions to Chaplin’s film, *Modern Times* (1936), a similarly parodic critique of industrial society. Another sequence, in which Totò and Nino happen upon an odd group of travelling carnival performers, respectfully lampoons the picaresque style of Federico Fellini’s early works. Most of all, Pasolini cites the rhythm and visual clichés of the neorealist tradition. However, the influences of neorealism are contaminated by comic gags, sped-up motion, and existential monologues by the crow (an aberration in itself). The circular road that ends where it begins symbolizes the director’s claim that neorealism has run its course and “the ideologies it reflected are now dead and part of history.”²⁷ This verdict is reiterated by the crow’s proclamation near the

end of the film that “it is the sunset of great hopes. . . . The age of Brecht and Rossellini is finished. Ideology is no longer in fashion.” Pasolini’s point is simple: For cinema to continue to comment, inform, and inspire, new modes of artistic construction and visual communication are required—forms that reflect the specific cultural and political landscape of postboom society in ways that mirror, rather than copy, the historical efficacy of neorealism to the immediate postwar reconstruction period.

For many directors of the late 1960s and early 1970s, this crisis led them to seek inspiration in the developing world, abandoning the self-reflexive tendencies of the pre- and postwar eras in favor of a borderless cinema that investigated the effects of globalization. Franco Solinas, screenwriter of several Zapata westerns, summarized the logic behind this movement:

First, the working class was thought of as completely integrated; it seemed nonexistent in relation to the revolutionary cause. Second, a deep analysis of the political situation had completely ruled out the possibility of a revolution on our continent. You can understand how explosions of colonial contradictions, the revolutions, the armed struggles that then were erupting in the entire geography of the Third World stirred up hope as well as interest. You had come to believe that capitalism, seemingly undefeatable at home, could have been defeated once and for all in its supplying bases.²⁸

For Italy, the postboom transition marked the end of discussions of a national cinema, as concern for *italianità* gave way to a burgeoning internationalism in both popular and auteur filmmaking.

Visual Media, Identity, and Contestation: Lessons from and for Developing Nations

Just as attention of many leftist Italian directors turned to the conditions of the Third World proletariat, their counterparts in the Global South looked to postwar Italian cinema for tactics suited to their own oppositions to dominant constructions of nationalism and neoliberal development. One hope was postulated by Argentine filmmakers, Fernando Solanas and Octavio

Getino in their 1969 manifesto, "Towards a Third Cinema: Notes and Experiences for the Development of a Cinema of Liberation in the Third World,"—one that contrasted with the “First Cinema” of Hollywood and the “Second Cinema” of European auteur films.²⁹ Whereas First Cinema was the hegemonic boogeyman representative of U. S. imperialism, the problem with Second Cinema was that its original “attempt at cultural decolonization . . . had reached the outer limits of what the System permits.”³⁰ Reminiscent of Pasolini’s claim, Solanas and Getino proffered:

While, during the early history (or the prehistory) of the cinema, it was possible to speak of a German, an Italian, or a Swedish cinema clearly differentiated and corresponding to specific national characteristics, today such differences have disappeared. The borders were wiped out along with the expansion of U. S. imperialism and the film model that is imposed: Hollywood movies.³¹

The Third Cinema was imagined as a new form of filmic creation that utilized the most affective subversive methods of auteur cinema yet remained outside the Hollywood-industrial system via emphasis on collective authorship, guerilla-filmmaking techniques, and clandestine or free public viewing. In this quest, the contestatory cinema of the Italian postwar period provided the greatest inspiration and relevance. Proponents of Third Cinema saw unparalleled political and economic similarities between their nations in Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia, and Italy (as opposed to other European countries). These commonalities included the relative youth of the modern Republic, rapidity of industrial development and its associated transformation of agrarianism, concurrence of growth in mass media consumption and the secularization of national culture, extraordinary migration flows and urbanization, and the profuse influence of the U. S. on development strategies and political leadership. Considering that a primary tenet of Third Cinema was to present “areas of national life often neglected by

official discourse and industrial cinema and thrust them into the international limelight,” the legacy of Italian postwar cinema provided profound examples.³²

Dissections of the various Italian genres pinpoint the specific formal modes considered to have the greatest oppositional vigor and cultural resonance. neorealism adequately conveyed the revolutionary spirit of proletarian movements and posited an alternative, nonauthoritarian and noneconomic path to national unity. Realistic presentations of the conditions of the downtrodden and oppressed imparted the underlying ideological messages with an appearance of credibility and objectivity. A downside to neorealism, however, was the prevalence of melodrama that stained the narrative structure. Melodrama sanitized the radical tropes of the genre—the use of nonprofessional actors and location shooting, and presentation of the everyday lives of the poor—by infusing theatricality and sentimentality into depictions of reality. This allowed for the genre’s defining visual codes to be translated to more programmatic and fictional “character studies,” in which the examination of social relations centered on the comic or quixotic experiences of the everyday, devoid of broader political engagement and ideological impress. Another drawback of neorealism was its inability to offer practical solutions to the realities it conveyed. As the Italian case indicated, audiences were likely to grow weary of seeing their own plight exhibited on film without any offering of resolution or optimism.

Although the sardonic and self-reflexive *commedia all’italiana* genre illustrated the unrivaled ability of comedy to captivate the widest geographic and demographic audience, its emphasis on humor distracted from the seriousness of pressing cultural and political issues. Regardless of the social preconceptions these films intended to subvert, they ran the risk of reiterating, rather than deconstructing, stereotypes. Despite being more popular than comedy among the working classes, the peplum genre suffered the escapist trappings of First Cinema—a

simplistic rendering of good and evil and fantasy-laden storylines bound to ancient history. The spaghetti western genre maintained the disadvantages of the pepla. Yet, the specific intent to subvert the genre most emblematic of First Cinema (as conducted by the Zapata westerns, in particular) was a radical move forward. Even though spaghetti westerns developed within the industrial framework established by Hollywood, they demonstrated the possibility of contaminating dominant systems of representation from within “the fortress.”

Third Cinema found its greatest inspiration in certain elements of auteur cinema—specifically, the interrogative “film inquests” that utilized the documentary techniques of neorealism to project unwavering ideological and acerbic critiques of the status quo. Of course, such overtly political films were not without their weaknesses. They often failed to generate mass viewership and their message was frequently bound to the personal philosophy of individual authors. However, the ability of films such as Pasolini’s *Accattone*, *Mamma Roma*, and *Comizi d’amore*, Luchino Visconti’s *Rocco e i suoi fratelli*, and Francesco Rosi’s *Salvatore Giuliano* and *Le mani sulla città* to produce official reactions from the State attested to their influence. The power in this mode of production derived from its resistance to co-optation and adaptation. Refutation of the claims put forth in these films required either public acknowledgment of the subversive messages, (which effectively provided free publicity to contestatory arguments), or production of responsive works by the State (which would be lambasted as propaganda and likely inspire more “inquests”).

Given the omnipresence of First Cinema and its essentially complete assimilation of Second Cinema in Western nations, it seems logical to project that “film as a subversive art” is nearing its end.³³ However, Third Cinema is alive and well, evidenced by a profusion of critical films being made in West Africa, Brazil, Cuba, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Oceania, and by

immigrants from such nations now living in Europe and North America.³⁴ Compared to new media, cinema still struggles to overcome the elitism ascribed to the relatively high cost of production. Yet, the primary advantage it retains over television, print, radio, and the internet is its lack of saturation. Annual global production of films totals in the thousands—a minuscule number compared to the millions of articles, television programs, albums, weblogs, and webvideos produced yearly. Whereas filmmakers are able to use television and the Internet to disseminate their works beyond the silver screen, the reverse is rare.

For twenty-first century artists determined to express alternative views of the effects of sociopolitical and economic transformation, the proclamation by Solanas and Getino still resonates: “The capacity for synthesis and the penetration of the film image, the possibilities offered by the living document, and naked reality, and the power of enlightenment of audiovisual means make film far more effective than any other tool of communication.”³⁵ Even though cinema’s reign as the most popular visual medium lasted for only a few decades, the role that this “seventh art” played in postwar Italian struggles to define the nation greatly contributed to contemporary understandings of the power of film. In a world where “the image of reality is more important than reality itself,” there is no better medium to challenge the hegemony of neoliberalism and imperialism—which depends so much on the veiling of socioeconomic relations behind a “screen of images and appearances.” As Pasolini declared, cinema is “the semiology of reality,” and films *represent* reality “with reality itself.”³⁶

For the Mezzogiorno, cinema during the postwar period enabled the inclusion of the masses in regional and national discourse for the first time since unification. Contextual analysis of genre development between 1945 and 1975 illustrates how the strategies of social and political engagement of the Southern Question concocted during the eighty years of the Liberal period

were refashioned and contested during the first thirty years of the modern State. Although postwar cinema empowered refutations of the longstanding stereotypes of southern backwardness, parochialism, and criminality in a representational form open to all strata of the population, it also reiterated the Achilles' heel of southern identity. The South has always been defined from the outside, as a comparative Other of the North, as well as of modernity and progress. More films have been made *for* or *about* the South than *by* southerners themselves. Whether one can posit southern culture as a collection of identifiable commonalities is somewhat irrelevant, just as attempts to define working-class culture are mired in futility and abstraction. This is because the South, as an imagined space, has been, and still is of greater rhetorical (political) value than any reality (sociocultural).

In recent years, scholars and artists have begun to produce portraits of the South responsive to Franco Cassano's call for *pensiero meridiano* (southern thinking).³⁷ The Istituto Meridiana (IMES), founded in the 1980s with the aim of investigating the South according to "its constitutive parts and to its internal differences" rather than its opposition "as a homogeneous bloc to the Center-North," remains at the forefront of producing endogenous scholarly works that contest the "Mezzogiorno's mainstream history, founded upon a deformed image of uniform backwardness and poverty."³⁸ The last decade has seen the growth of Neapolitan, Sicilian, and Apulian schools of cinema in reference to a number of films made by southern filmmakers that focus on documenting contemporary regional life.³⁹ New southernist literature and cinema, in a Gramscian sense, seek to empower the South by obtaining hegemony over the *representation* of identity—something that has alluded to region since its ideological conception.

In relation to the national question, the South has proven to be a necessary site of displacement. Since unification, the region has been invoked both as the primary hindrance to

economic development and national unity and as creator of the corrupt, inefficient, and polarizing aspects of State centralization. In the last two decades, southerners have been replaced as the barbarous, contaminating Others of the North by an unprecedented influx of migrants from the Middle East, Africa, and the Balkans. Italy's transformation from its historic position of massive emigration to one of net immigration has produced a xenophobic backlash, most fervently voiced by political parties of the right. One might think that such growing disdain for foreigners would entail an end to prejudice towards southerners, as Italians are called to rally around an imagined ethnic nationalism. This, however, has not been the case. As recently as 2008, the Lega Nord's Minister of the Interior, Roberto Maroni, iterated familiar lines when he declared that the "southern culture of organized crime" was the greatest problem facing the nation, and that "the government [was] facing a civil war" between a "progressive North and a South that knows nothing but corruption and violence."⁴⁰

As unified Italy nears its sesquicentennial, the persistence of regional antagonisms suggests that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Or, perhaps Giuseppe di Lampedusa, in his novel, *Il Gattopardo*, set in Sicily on the eve of Garibaldi's invasion, said it best: "If things are to stay as they are, things will have to change."⁴¹

NOTES

Introduction

- ¹ The quotation is from a letter sent by Metternich to British Foreign Minister, Lord Palmerston, August 6, 1847.
- ² M. M. Watson, *Regional Development Policy and Administration in Italy* (London: Longman, 1970), 13.
- ³ Ibid., 21.
- ⁴ Kevin Stannard, "How Many Italies? Process and Scale in the Development of the Italian Space Economy," *Geography* 84 (1999), 313.
- ⁵ Watson, *Regional Development Policy*, 1.
- ⁶ Edward Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (New York: Free Press, 1958).
- ⁷ *Mezzogiorno* translates literally as "mid-day." The name refers to Italy south of Rome, including Abruzzi, Molise, Campania, Basilicata, Puglia, Calabria, Sardinia, and Sicily—the land of the mid-day sun. Some scholars also include the southern provinces of Latium in the Mezzogiorno.
- ⁸ Russell King, *The Industrial Geography of Italy* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 283.
- ⁹ Marcia Landy, *Italian Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 121.
- ¹⁰ Cited in Peter Bondanella, *Italian Cinema: From Neorealism to the Present* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 31.
- ¹¹ Landy, *Italian Film*, 173.
- ¹² Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 350.
- ¹³ Joseph A. Conforti, *Imagining New England: Explorations of Regional Identity from the Pilgrims to the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).
- ¹⁴ Rudolph Arnheim, *Film as Art* (London: Faber, 1957); Brenda Bollag, "Words on Screen: The Problem of the Linguistic Sign in Cinema," *Semiotica* 72 (1988): 71-90; John Collier, *Visual Anthropology* (New York: Holt, Reinhart, and Winston, 1967); Fredric Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); Martha Wolfenstein and Nathan Leites, *Movies: A Psychological Study* (New York: Atheneum, 1950); Peter Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972); and Mas'ud Zavarzadeh, *Seeing Films Politically* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991).
- ¹⁵ Jeff Hopkins, "Mapping of Cinematic Places: Icons, Ideology, and the Power of (Mis)representation," in *Place, Power, Situation, and Spectacle: A Geography of Film*, eds. Stuart Aitken and Leo Zonn (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994), 48. Key works in this vein include Jurij Lotman, *Semiotics of Cinema* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1976); Christian Metz, *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974); Winfried Noth, *Handbook of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in Cinema*; and Sol Worth, *Studying Visual Communication* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981).

¹⁶ Examples of film theorists examining geographical concepts in and of cinema include: André Bazin, *What is Cinema?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); Peter Bondanella, *Italian Cinema*; Gian Piero Brunetta, *Forma e parola nel cinema italiano: il film muto, Pasolini, Antonioni* (Padua: Liviana, 1979); Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986); Christopher Frayling, *Sergio Leone* (London: Faber and Faber, 2000); Philip French, *Westerns: Aspects of a Movie Genre* (New York: Viking, 1974); Maggie Günsberg, *Italian Cinema: Gender and Genre* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Marcia Landy, *Italian Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Millicent Marcus, *After Fellini: Cinema in the Postmodern Age* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); John David Rhodes, *Stupendous, Miserable City: Pasolini's Rome* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); P. Adams Sitney, *Vital Crises in Italian Cinema: Iconography, Stylistics, Politics* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995); Pierre Sorlin, *Italian National Cinema 1896-1996* (London: Routledge, 1996); and Christopher Wagstaff, *Italian Neorealist Cinema: An Aesthetic Approach* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007). Notable exceptions of geographers engaging film include: Stuart Aitken and Leon Zonn, eds., *Place, Power, Situation, and Spectacle: A Geography of Film* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994); Jacqueline Burgess and John Gold, *Geography, the Media, and Popular Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995); John Eyles and Walter Peace, "Signs and Symbols in Hamilton: An Iconology of Steeltown," *Geografiska Annaler, Series B, Human Geography* 72, nos. 2/3 (1990): 73-88; Matthew Gandy, "Landscapes of Deliquescence in Michelangelo Antonioni's *Red Desert*," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 28, no. 2 (2003): 218-237; and Christopher Lukinbeal and Stefan Zimmermann, eds., *The Geography of Cinema: A Cinematic World* (Berlin: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2008).

¹⁷ Important examples include: Marc Brosseau, "Geography's Literature," *Progress in Human Geography* 18, no. 3 (1994): 333-353; Denis Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (London: Croom Helm, 1984); John Marsh, "Postcard Landscapes: An Exploration in Method," *Canadian Geographer* 29, no. 3 (1985): 265-267; B. S. Osborne, "Fact, Symbol, and Message: Three Approaches to Literary Landscape," *Canadian Geographer* 32, no. 3 (1988): 267-269; and Douglas Pocock, ed., *Humanistic Geography and Literature* (London: Croom Helm, 1981).

¹⁸ Hopkins, "Mapping of Cinematic Places," 49.

¹⁹ Aitken and Zonn, *Place, Power, Situation, and Spectacle*, 5.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ See *Journal of Geography* 101, no. 6 (2002); "New Directions in Media Geography: Special Issue," *GeoJournal* 74, no. 3 (2009); and *Aether: The Journal of Media Geography*, <http://130.166.124.2/~aether/>.

²² See André Bazin, "Le Western," in *Qu'est-ce Que Le Cinema, Vol. III, Cinema et Sociologie* (Paris: Editions de Cerf, 1961): 146-156; John G. Cawelti, *The Six-Gun Mystique* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1984); French, *Westerns*, 1974; Jack Nachbar, ed., *Focus on the Western* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974); and Will Wright, *Sixguns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

²³ Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988).

²⁴ Ibid., 8.

²⁵ Angelo Restivo, *The Cinema of Economic Miracles: Visuality and Modernization in the Italian Art Film* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

²⁶ Ibid., 3-4.

²⁷ Marcia Landy, *Film, Politics, and Gramsci* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

²⁸ Much of Hall's work and that of his colleagues that formed The Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies is indebted to Gramsci. For an overview, see David Harris, *From Class Struggle to the Politics of Pleasure: The Effects of Gramscianism on Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1992); and James Proctor, *Stuart Hall* (London: Routledge, 2004). Concerning Said's application of Gramsci's ideas, see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979); *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993); and *Power, Politics, and Culture* (New York: Vintage, 2002), among others.

²⁹ Landy, *Italian Film*, 149.

³⁰ John Agnew, "The Rhetoric of Regionalism: The Northern League in Italian Politics, 1983-1994," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 20, no. 2 (1995): 156-172; *Place and Politics in Modern Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); and *Geopolitics: Re-visioning World Politics* (London: Routledge, 2003); Denis Cosgrove, "Towards a Radical Cultural Geography," *Antipode* 15 (1983): 1-11; and "Ideas and Culture: A Response to Don Mitchell," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series 21 (1996): 574-575; James Duncan and Nancy Duncan, "Ideology and Bliss: Roland Barthes and the Secret Histories of Landscape" in *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text, and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape*, eds. Trevor Barnes and James Duncan (London: Routledge, 1992): 18-37; Peter Jackson, "The Idea of Culture: A Response to Don Mitchell," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series 21 (1996): 572-573; and Don Mitchell, "There's No Such Thing as Culture: Towards a Reconceptualization of the Idea of Culture in Geography," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series 20 (1995): 102-116.

³¹ Conforti, *Imagining New England*, 2001.

³² *Ibid.*, 6.

³³ *Ibid.*, 1.

Chapter 1

¹ Quoted in Carlo Tullio-Altan, *La nostra Italia: Arretratezza socioculturale, clientelismo, trasformismo e ribellismo dall'Unità ad oggi* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1986), 16 and Denis Mack Smith, *Mazzini* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 7.

² *I mille* (the thousand) refers to the number of northern troops Garibaldi initially directed during the campaign. They are better known as the *Camicie Rosse* (Redshirts) in reference to their makeshift uniforms.

³ An attack on Rome by Garibaldi was forbidden by Count Cavour and Victor Emmanuel II who feared an altercation with France.

⁴ John Dickie, *Darkest Italy: The Nation and Stereotypes of the Mezzogiorno, 1860-1900* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 25.

⁵ Silvana Patriarca, "How Many Italies? Representing the South in Official Statistics," in Jane Schneider, ed., *Italy's Southern Question: Orientalism in One Country* (New York: Berg, 1998), 82. Eligible voters were limited to men of the Piedmont and Lombard aristocracy who were 28 years of age or older, thus confining the initial electorate to such a small percentage of the populace.

⁶ The most notable leaders of the *Liberal-Conservatori* faction were Antonio di Rudini (Prime Minister 1891-92, 1896-98) and Sidney Sonnino (Prime Minister 1906, 1909-10; Foreign Minister 1914-19). For the *Sinistra Liberale*, the most prominent were Giuseppe Zanardelli (Prime Minister 1901-03) and Giovanni Giolitti (Prime Minister 1892-93, 1903-05, 1906-09, 1911-14, 1920-21).

⁷ Although a presence in the national political scene, the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) (formed in 1892) did not achieve substantial seats in the Chamber of Deputies until after World War I, once internal schisms were settled. When the faction of the radical left split to form the Italian Communist Party (PCI), the Maximalists (represented by Benito Mussolini) prevailed over the Reformists to control the party's dominant ideology.

⁸ Patriarca, "How Many Italies?," 77. The second major electoral reform of the Liberal Period occurred in 1913 when the vote was extended to all males over thirty and to those over twenty-one who had military service or educational qualifications.

⁹ Marta Petrusiewicz, "The Demise of Latifondismo," in Robert Lumley and Jonathan Morris, eds., *The New History of the Italian South: The Mezzogiorno Revisited* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997), 20.

¹⁰ According to Petrusiewicz, "until the twentieth century, oranges and lemons remained virtually unknown in north Italian cities and the greater part of Sicily's citrus fruit continued to be sold abroad, mainly in North America." Marta Petrusiewicz, *Latifundium: Moral Economy and Material Life in a European Periphery*, translated by Judith C. Green (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 219.

¹¹ Fulvio Cammarano, "The Nationalization of Politics and the Politicization of the Nation in Liberal Italy," in Robert Lumley and Jonathan Morris, eds., *The New History of the Italian South: The Mezzogiorno Revisited* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997), 152.

¹² Denis Mack Smith, *Mazzini* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 84.

¹³ John Dickie, "Imagined Italies," in David Forgacs and Robert Lumley, eds., *Italian Cultural Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 29.

¹⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

¹⁵ Dickie, "Imagined Italies," 27.

¹⁶ Gianfranco Viesti, *Abolire il Mezzogiorno* (Roma: Laterza, 2003). Through statistical analysis of economic indicators, Viesti insists that, although the Italian South may be underdeveloped in comparison with the North, it is on par with other depressed regions within industrialized nations (e.g. the American South and Almeria, Spain).

¹⁷ Benito Giordano, "'Institutional Thickness,' Political Sub-culture and the Resurgence of (the New) Regionalism in Italy—a Case Study of the Northern League in the Province of Varese," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 26, no. 1 (2001): 25-41.

¹⁸ The full name is *Lega Nord per l'Indipendenza della Padania*. It formed as a collection of numerous regional-autonomist parties including *Lega Lombarda*, *Liga Veneta*, *Piemont Autonomista*, *Uniuin Ligure*, *Lega Emiliano-Romagnola*, and *Alleanza Toscana*.

¹⁹ Quoted in Damian Tambini, *Nationalism in Italian Politics: The Stories of the Lega Nord 1980-2000* (London: Routledge, 2001), 103.

²⁰ Racial and ethnic slurs directed at southerners are plentiful in Bossi's book, *La rivoluzione* (Milano: Sperling and Kupfer, 1993). The Lega Nord has produced its own "official" propaganda in the form of leaflets, cartoons, billboards, and television commercials. One of the most famous was a leaflet circulated in northern cities that read: "Southerners go home. Your people need you there to help fight the mafia." For greater discussion of the party's production of antisouthern imagery, see two works by John Agnew, "The Rhetoric of Regionalism: The Northern League in Italian Politics, 1983-1994," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 20, no. 2 (1995): 156-172, and *Place and Politics in Modern Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Margarita Gomez-Reino Cachafeiro, *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Italian Politics: Inventing the Padania, The Lega Nord and the Northern*

Question (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002); Isabelle Fremeaux and Daniele Albertazzi, "Discursive Strategies around 'Community' in Political Propaganda: The Case of the Lega Nord," *National Identities* 4, no. 2 (2002); and Benito Giordano, "The Continuing Transformation of Italian Politics and Contradictory Fortunes of the Lega Nord," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 8, no. 2 (2003).

²¹ Bossi, *La rivoluzione*, 23.

²² Agnew, *Place and Politics*, 176.

²³ *Ibid.*, 60.

²⁴ Alessandro Cavalli, "Reflections on Political Culture and the 'Italian National Character'," *Daedalus* 130, no. 3 (2001): 119-137.

²⁵ Piero Bevilacqua, *Breve storia dell'Italia meridionale: dall'Ottocento a oggi* (Roma: Donzelli, 1993), 7. Translated by Piepergerdes.

²⁶ John A. Davis, "Remapping Italy's Path to the Twentieth Century," *The Journal of Modern History* 66, no. 2 (1994), 293.

²⁷ Jonathan Morris, "Challenging Meridionalismo: Constructing a New History for Southern Italy," in Robert Lumley and Jonathan Morris, eds., *The New History of the Italian South* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997), 4.

²⁸ See Giuseppe Civile, *Il commune rustic: Storia sociale di un paese del Mezzogiorno nell'ottocento* (Bologna: Guida, 1990) and *I volti dell'élite: Classe dirigente nell'ottocento meridionale* (Napoli: Libreria Dante e Descartes, 2002); and Marta Petrusiewicz, *Latifondo: Economia morale e vita material in una periferia dell'ottocento* (Venice: Saggi Marsilio, 1989).

²⁹ See Franco Bonelli, "Il capitalism italiano: Linee generali d'interpretazione," in *Storia d'Italia: Annali* (Turino: Einaudi, 1978): 1193-1255; and Luciano Cafagna, *Dualismo e sviluppo nella storia d'Italia* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1989).

³⁰ See *La questione settentrionale*, special issue of *Meridiana* no. 16 (1993); Giuseppe Berta, *Questione settentrionale* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2007); and Marco Meriggi, *Breve storia dell'Italia settentrionale* (Roma: Donzelli, 1996).

³¹ See Mario Alcaro, *L'identità meridionale* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 1999) and Franco Cassano, *Pensiero meridionale* (Bari: Laterza, 1996).

³² Morris, "Challenging Meridionalismo," 4.

³³ Dickie, *Darkest Italy*, 13.

³⁴ Joseph Luzzi, "Italy without Italians: Literary Origins of a Romantic Myth," *Modern Language Notes* 117, no. 1 (2002): 48-83.

³⁵ Nelson Moe, "North, South, and the Identity of Italy and Europe," in Forum—Europe's Southern Question: The Other Within, *Nineteenth-Century Concepts* 26, no. 4 (2004): 314-319.

³⁶ Augustin Creuzé de Lesser, *Voyage en Italie et en Sicile* (Paris: Alphonse Pigoreau, 1806), quoted in Nelson Moe, *The View From Vesuvius: Italian Culture and the Southern Question* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 37.

³⁷ Anne Louise Germaine de Staël-Holstein (Madame de Staël), *Corinne, or Italy*, translated by Sylvia Raphael (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 193.

³⁸ Donatien Alphonse François de Sade (the Marquis de Sade), *Voyage d'Italie* (Paris: Fayard, 1995), 211. Quoted in Moe, "North, South, and Identity," 316.

³⁹ Gabriella Gribaudi, "Images of the South: The Mezzogiorno as seen by Insiders and Outsiders," in Robert Lumley and Jonathan Morris, eds., *The New History of the Italian South* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997) 88.

⁴⁰ *La liberazione del Mezzogiorno e la formazione del Regno d'Italia*. Vol. 3 of *Carteggi di Camillo Cavour* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1952), 208.

⁴¹ Gribaudi, "Images of the South," 88-89.

⁴² Nelson Moe, "Il Sud dei piemontesi (1860-61)," *Meridiana* 15, no. 2 (1992), 87.

⁴³ Dickie, *Darkest Italy*, 25.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁴⁷ See Alfredo Niceforo, *L'Italia Barbara contemporanea (Studi ed appunti)* (Milano: Sandron, 1898); and Giuseppe Sergi, *Origine e Diffusione della stirpe mediterranea. Induzioni antropologiche* (Roma: Intonso, 1895).

⁴⁸ For examples of early *meridionalismo*, see Giustino Fortunato, *Carteggio, 1865-1911* (Bari: Argo, 1978), and *Il mezzogiorno e lo stato italiano* (Bari: Sereggio, 1911); Leopoldo Franchetti, *Mezzogiorno e colonie* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1950), *Condizioni politiche e amministrative della Sicilia*, Vol. 1 of Leopoldo Franchetti and Sidney Sonnino, *Inchiesta in Sicilia* (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1974), and *Politica e mafia in Sicilia. Gli inediti del 1876* (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1995); Sidney Sonnino, *I contadini in Sicilia*, Vol. II of *Inchiesta in Sicilia* (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1974); and Pasquale Villari, *Arte, storia e filosofia. Saggi critici* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1884), *Le lettere meridionali ed altri scritti sulla questione sociale in Italia* (Torino: Bocca, 1885), "Dove andiamo?," *Nuova Antologia*, November 1, 1893: 5-24, and *Le prime lettere meridionali* (Roma: La Voce, 1920).

⁴⁹ Gribaudi, "Images of the South," 93.

⁵⁰ Dickie, *Darkest Italy*, 55.

⁵¹ Villari, *Le lettere meridionali*, 173.

⁵² Elizabeth Cometi, "Trends in Italian Emigration," *The Western Political Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (1958): 820-834.

⁵³ Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy Since 1796* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2008), 278.

⁵⁴ *Campanilismo* refers to the primacy of allegiance to one's home town over regional and national identification.

⁵⁵ Cometi, "Trends in Italian Emigration," 826.

⁵⁶ Pasquale Verdicchio, *Antonio Gramsci: The Southern Question* (West Lafayette, IN: Bordighera, Inc., 1995), 42. Verdicchio is paraphrasing Gramsci's summation of the criticism of the campaign of State-sponsored emigration put forth by turn of the century writers such as Guido Dorso and Gaetano Salvemini.

⁵⁷ Francesco Crispi and Sidney Sonnino, quoted in Duggan, *Force of Destiny*, 291.

⁵⁸ Christopher Duggan, *Francesco Crispi, 1818-1901. From Nation to Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 432.

⁵⁹ Quoted in John A. Thayer, *Italy and the Great War* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 279.

⁶⁰ Guido Dorso, *La rivoluzione meridionale* (Turin: Gobetti, 1924), 217.

⁶¹ Antonio Gramsci, "Workers and Peasants," *L'Ordine Nuovo* 1, no. 91 (January 3, 1920): 9-20.

⁶² Quoted in Verdicchio, *Antonio Gramsci*, 36. *Notes on the Southern Problem and the Attitudes Toward it of Communists, Socialists and Democrats* is Gramsci's seminal critique of capitalism, the Italian State, and the *meridionalisti* in which his concepts of "hegemony," "passive revolution," and "organic intellectual" are first outlined. Commonly known as *The Southern Question*, it was written in 1926 as a response to Dorso's *La rivoluzione meridionale*, and completed just months before his imprisonment by the Fascists. It was first published in 1930 as "Some Themes Regarding the Southern Question," in *Lo stato operaio*, the theoretical journal of the PCI.

⁶³ Quoted in Verdicchio, *Antonio Gramsci*, 37-38.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 47.

⁶⁶ Mariella Pandolfi, "Two Italies: Rhetorical Figures of Failed Nationhood," in Jane Schneider, ed., *Italy's Southern Question: Orientalism in One Country* (New York: Berg, 1998), 287.

⁶⁷ Adrian Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power: Fascism in Italy, 1919-1929* (London: Routledge, 2003), 232.

⁶⁸ Quoted in Denis Mack Smith, *Mussolini* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1982), 145.

⁶⁹ Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, Joseph A. Buttigieg, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 143-145.

⁷⁰ Leon Trotsky, "Vodka, the Church, and the Cinema," *Pravda* (July 12, 1923).

Chapter 2

¹ P. Adams Sitney, *Vital Crises in Italian Cinema: Iconography, Stylistics, Politics* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), xi.

² See, for example, Peter Bondanella, *Italian Cinema: From Neorealism to the Present* (New York: Continuum, 1994); Gian Piero Brunetta, *Forma e parola nel cinema italiano: il film muto, Pasolini, Antonioni* (Padua: Liviana, 1979); Fredric Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); Marcia Landy, *Film, Politics, and Gramsci* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994) and *Italian Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Millicent Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); Angelo Restivo, *The Cinema of Economic Miracles: Visuality and Modernization in the Italian Art Film* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); Ned Rifkin, *Antonioni's Visual Language* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1977); Pierre Sorlin, *Italian National Cinema 1896-1996* (London: Routledge, 1996); and Vittorio Spinazzola, *Cinema e pubblico: lo spettacolo filmico in Italia 1945-1960* (Milan: Bompiani, 1974).

³ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986); Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

⁴ Quoted in Giampiero Tartagni, *Neorealism Up to 1950* (New York: Museum of Modern Art/Kultur Video, 1989).

⁵ Nadia Urbinati, "From Periphery to Modernity: Antonio Gramsci's Theory of Subordination and Hegemony," *Political Theory* 26, no. 3 (1998): 375-376.

⁶ Bondanella, 1994; Gian Piero Brunetta, *Storia del cinema italiano, vol. 3: Dal neorealismo al miracolo economica, 1945-1959* (Rome: Riuniti, 1993); Christopher Wagstaff, "Cinema," in David Forgacs and Robert Lumley, eds., *Italian Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁷ Restivo, *Cinema of Economic Miracles*, 24-25.

⁸ Landy, *Italian Film*, 310; Jarod Becker, *Nationalism and Culture: Gabriele D'Annunzio and Italy after the Risorgimento* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 211.

⁹ Camerini's most notable films during the Fascist regime include *Rotaie* (*Rails*, 1929), *Gli uomini che mascalzoni!* (*What Scoundrels Men Are!*, 1932), *Darò un milione* (*I'll Give a Million*, 1935), *Il signor Max* (*Mister Max*, 1937), and *I grandi magazzini* (*Department Store*, 1939). Blasetti's include *Sole* (*Sun*, 1929), *Terra madre* (*Mother Earth*, 1931), *Resurrectio* (*Resurrection*, 1931), *La tavola dei poveri* (*Table of the Poor*, 1932), *Palio* (1932), and *1860* (1934).

¹⁰ James Hay, *Popular Film Culture in Fascist Italy: The Passing of the Rex* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Landy, *Italian Film*.

¹¹ Carlo Lizzani, *Il cinema italiano 1895-1979* (Rome: Riuniti, 1979), 22. The *telefono bianco* (white telephone) or *telefoni bianchi* films--so named because of the frequent inclusion of a white telephone in the bedroom--were largely comedies centered on "the foibles of upper-class life" (Landy, *Italian Film*, p. 8) tending to emphasize class hierarchy, luxury, and social conservatism.

¹² Bondanella, *Italian Cinema*, 14-15.

¹³ Landy, *Italian Film*, 15.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁵ Gianfranco Mino Gori, *Patria diva: La storia d'Italia nei film del ventennio* (Florence: Usher, 1988).

¹⁶ Examples include Richard B.J. Bosworth, and Patrizia Dogliani, eds., *Italian Fascism: History, Memory, and Representation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999); Gori, 1988; Hay 1987; Marcia Landy, *The Folklore of Consensus: Theatricality in Italian Cinema, 1930-1943* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998); Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum, eds., *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004); Elaine Mancini, *Struggles of the Italian Film Industry during Fascism, 1930-1935* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985); Jacqueline Reich and Piero Garofalo, eds., *Re-viewing Fascism: Italian Cinema, 1922-1943* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002); and Sorlin, 1996).

¹⁷ Landy, *Italian Film*, 17, 13.

¹⁸ Restivo, *Cinema of Economic Miracles*, 10.

¹⁹ Pamela Shurmer-Smith, ed., *Doing Cultural Geography* (London: Sage, 2002), 37; Tim Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Peter Jackson, "Street Life: the Politics of Carnival" *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 6 (1988): 213-227; Don Mitchell, *Cultural Geography: a Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

²⁰ Mitchell, *Cultural Geography*, 165. Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1994); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

²¹ John Agnew, *Place and Politics in Modern Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 93.

²² Landy, *Italian Film*, 60.

²³ *Ibid.*, 61.

²⁴ Quoted in Tartagni, 1989.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ The Esposizione Universale Roma is a large urban complex begun in 1935 by Mussolini. It is a model of Fascist architecture originally created for the 1942 world exhibition. Its greatest symbol is the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, better known as the "Square Colosseum."

²⁷ Mancini, *Struggles of the Italian Film Industry*, 165.

²⁸ Landy, *Italian Film*, 240.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 217.

³¹ Agnew, *Place and Politics in Modern Italy*.

³² Ginsborg, *History of Contemporary Italy*, 219.

³³ Agnew, *Place and Politics in Modern Italy*.

Chapter 3

¹ Peter Bondanella, *Italian Cinema: From Neorealism to the Present* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 142-143. Even though this marked a substantial reduction in foreign percentages, 233 American films were imported compared to only 137 produced domestically. Italian films comprised less than 31% of total box-office receipts in 1957.

² Alan S. Zuckerman, *The Politics of Faction: Christian Democratic Rule in Italy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 156.

³ For an exhaustive account of the ideological, political, and economic involvement of the United States in the formation of the Italian Republic, see John Lamberton Harper, *America and the Reconstruction of Italy, 1945-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

⁴ Alan B. Mountjoy, *Problem Regions of Europe: The Mezzogiorno* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 45-46.

⁵ It was not until the Single European Act of 1987 that people, capital, and services were granted increased freedoms of mobility between member states.

⁶ Allan Rodgers, *Economic Development in Retrospect: The Italian Model and Its Significance for Regional Planning in Market-Oriented Economies* (Washington, D.C.: V.H. Winston and Sons, 1979), 52.

⁷ Jon Cohen and Giovanni Federico, *The Growth of the Italian Economy, 1820-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁸ This is not to suggest that irrigation in the Po Valley was in any way minimal. On the contrary, the Po Valley contained and still contains the greatest area of irrigated land in Italy. My point is to suggest that the higher order and density of the Po River system facilitated greater localization (and thus shorter physical networks) of irrigation while adequate precipitation totals throughout the basin afforded small- and medium-sized farms with greater potential for nonirrigated production than in other areas of the peninsula.

⁹ Cohen and Federico, *Growth of the Italian Economy*.

¹⁰ Ibid., 89. Cohen and Federico note that, until 1968 when all tariffs within the EEC were eliminated, Italy remained the most protectionist member state.

¹¹ Mountjoy, *Problem Regions of Europe*, 35.

¹² Rodgers, *Economic Development in Retrospect*, 76.

¹³ Ibid., 83.

¹⁴ Mountjoy, *Problem Regions of Europe*, 9.

¹⁵ Ibid., 8-9.

¹⁶ See chapter 4 for a discussion of state involvement in land reform and redistribution during Phase I of the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*, as well as under the *Enti di Reforma*.

¹⁷ Mountjoy, *Problem Regions of Europe*, 35.

¹⁸ Ibid., 35.

¹⁹ Alfredo Del Monte and Adriano Giannola, *Il mezzogiorno nell'economia italiana* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1978).

²⁰ Zuckerman, *Politics of Faction*, 184.

²¹ Renzo Stefanelli, *Lotte agrarie e modello di sviluppo 1947-1967* (Bari: De Donato, 1975), 21-22.

²² The transition of labor from the agricultural to the industrial sector is of particular necessity in the Rostowian and Dual-Sector models of development theory.

²³ Umberto Leanza, *Legislazione per il Mezzogiorno e Mercato comune europeo* (Rome: Giuffrè, 1963), 66.

²⁴ Mountjoy, *Problem Regions of Europe*, 36.

²⁵ It was not until the late 1960s-early 1970s that small- and medium-sized industries such as textiles, chemicals, and farm machinery were targeted more extensively under the Cassa.

²⁶ Mountjoy, *Problem Regions of Europe*, 39.

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- ²⁷ Rodgers, *Economic Development in Retrospect*, 101-110.
- ²⁸ Mountjoy, *Problem Regions of Europe*, 44.
- ²⁹ Rodgers, *Economic Development in Retrospect*, 67.
- ³⁰ Guido Cella, "Industrializzazione e Emigrazione, Il Caso del Mezzogiorno nel Decennio 1961-1971," *Rassegna Economica*. Banco di Napoli 37, no. 4 (1974): 1067-1088.
- ³¹ *Terrone* (*terrone* being the plural) is a derogatory term used by northern Italians to describe southern Italians. It is similar to an ethnic slur and has connotations of "hillbilly," "rube," or "peasant."
- ³² Rodgers, *Economic Development in Retrospect*, 58-59; 67.
- ³³ Cohen and Federico, *Growth of the Italian Economy*, 103.
- ³⁴ Statistics derived from *Atlante Tematico d'Italia*, folio 42 (Milan: Consociazione Turistica Italiana, 1989).
- ³⁵ Rodgers, *Economic Development in Retrospect*, 102.
- ³⁶ Cohen and Federico, *Growth of the Italian Economy*, 104-105.
- ³⁷ For discussion of numerous historical references to southern migration as a hemorrhaging of the region, see Russell King, "Italian Migration: The Clotting of the Haemorrhage," *Geography* 70 (1985): 171-175.
- ³⁸ Bondanella, *Italian Cinema*, 142.
- ³⁹ John Dickie, "Imagined Italies," in David Forgacs and Robert Lumley, eds., *Italian Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 28.
- ⁴⁰ Christopher Wagstaff, "Cinema," in David Forgacs and Robert Lumley, eds., *Italian Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 220.
- ⁴¹ Bondanella, *Italian Cinema*, 143.
- ⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴³ Wagstaff, "Cinema," 218.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., 219.

Chapter 4

- ¹ Claudio D. Fava, *Alberto Sordi* (Milan: Gremese, 1993), 121. The quotation is from Sordi's remarks to the press at the Milanese premier of his film *Mafioso* in 1962.
- ² Marcia Landy, *Italian Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 98; Peter Bondanella, *Italian Cinema: From Neorealism to the Present* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 144.
- ³ Christopher Wagstaff, "Cinema," in David Forgacs and Robert Lumley, eds., *Italian Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 225.

⁴ Mira Liehm, *Passion and Defiance: Italian Film from 1942 to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 57. The quotation is translated from the amended version (1959) of the Andreotti Law, first enacted in 1949 as a response to unfavorable depictions of Italy presented in neorealist films.

⁵ This is not to say that comedies were the only targets of State denouncement, censorship, and legal indictment. Federico Fellini's *La dolce vita* (1960) and all of Pier Paolo Pasolini's works of the 1960s (and 1970s) are among the many noncomedic films castigated by the government during this period. For a greater discussion of Pasolini, see chapter 5.

⁶ Some critics feel that Alberto Lattuada's film, *La Spiaggia* (*Riviera*, a.k.a. *The Beach*, 1954) initiated this new style.

⁷ Ernesto G. Laura, *Comedy Italian Style* (Rome: National Association of Motion Pictures and Affiliated Industries, n.d.), 9.

⁸ Ibid., 6.

⁹ Bondanella, *Italian Cinema*, 145.

¹⁰ Angelo Restivo, *The Cinema of Economic Miracles: Visuality and Modernization in the Italian Art Film* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 47.

¹¹ André Bazin, *What is Cinema? Vol. 2* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).

¹² Stuart Hall, "Encoding/decoding," in *Culture, Media, Language* (London: Hutchinson, 1980): 128-138. Hall's development of these positions is derived from Frank Parkin's delineations in his book, *Class Inequality and Social Order* (London: McGibbon and Kee, 1971).

¹³ James Proctor, *Stuart Hall* (London: Routledge, 2004), 70.

¹⁴ Restivo, *Cinema of Economic Miracles*, 48.

¹⁵ Bondanella, *Italian Cinema*, 156.

¹⁶ Landy, *Italian Film*, 144.

¹⁷ Ibid., 146.

¹⁸ Ibid., 148.

¹⁹ Bondanella, *Italian Cinema*, 151.

²⁰ Restivo, *Cinema of Economic Miracles*, 47.

²¹ Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 162.

²² Bondanella, *Italian Cinema*, 153.

²³ Landy, *Italian Film*, 223.

²⁴ Bondanella, *Italian Cinema*, 155.

²⁵ Restivo, *Cinema of Economic Miracles*, 57.

Chapter 5

¹ With regard for the Italian case, my use of *mass culture* is in accordance with John Foot's delineation between it and *popular culture*. *Mass culture*, synonymous with *consumer culture* and *commercial culture*, "signifies all that brought by the boom—and above all by television and from the US – the 'enemy' for so many intellectuals on the Italian left during and after the 'miracle'." In Italy, *popular culture* is used most often to refer to "the system of lifestyles, of practices, of habits and customs, of beliefs, of attitudes. . ." of the proletarian classes and, in particular, the southern peasantry. The word *Subculture* often is used in *popular* discussions as well, usually to imply subordination and resistance. John Foot, *Milan Since the Miracle: City, Culture, Identity* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 20.

² These comments were made by Giulio Andreotti in a letter in the Christian Democrat weekly, *Libertas*, on February 24, 1952. Quoted in Christopher Wagstaff, *Italian Neorealist Cinema: An Aesthetic Approach* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 457.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Quoted in Maria Adelaide Frabotta, "Government Propaganda: Official Newsreels and Documentaries in the 1950s," in *The Art of Persuasion: Political Communication in Italy from 1945 to the 1990s*, eds. Luciano Cheles and Lucio Sponza (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 50-51.

⁵ INCOM was an established producer of newsreels prior to its partnership with the government. Between 1946 and 1950, INCOM made over five hundred shorts for domestic and American markets. The company also published a highly popular magazine, *La Settimana INCOM Illustrata*. LUCE was the agency in charge of Fascist film propaganda established by Mussolini. Dissolved after the war, it was reestablished in 1951 by Prime Minister De Gasperi.

⁶ For thorough accounts of the Documentation Center's media production during the 1950s, see Marco Bertozzi, *Storia del documentario italiano: Immagine e culture dell'altro cinema* (Milano: Marsilio, 2008); Maria Adelaide Frabotta, "Government Propaganda," 49-61; and Paolo Scrivano, "Signs of Americanization in Italian Domestic Life: Italy's Postwar Conversion to Consumerism," *Journal of Contemporary History* 40, no. 2 (2005): 317-340. For a detailed analysis of the newsreels made for international markets and their correlation to the internationalist platform of the DC, see Maria Adelaide Frabotta, "Official Italian Newsreels of the 1950s: Europeanism and International Politics," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 15, no. 3 (1995): 362-366.

⁷ Bongiorno hosted numerous game shows on RAI from the 1950s through the 1970s earning him the nickname "*Il Re del Quiz*" ("The Quiz King"). One of the most popular series was *Campanile sera* (Bell Tower Evening, 1959-1962), which pitted citizens from one northern and one southern town against each other in physical and mental challenges.

⁸ Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, translated by Ben Lawton and Louise K. Barnett (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), xix. "Art" and "auteur" are labels most commonly used for films of the aforementioned directors during this period. The terms are meant to summarize the innovations in filmmaking techniques (e.g. postproduction color dyeing, crane and aerial shots, point-of-view and depth-of-field filming), hybridization of narrative structures (e.g. neorealism, fantasy, melodrama, and film noir), and tone (e.g. theoretical, existential, and metaphysical) developed by these filmmakers. They also refer to the *superspettacolo* (blockbuster) qualities of the films, in their financial costs and international acclaim. For greater discussion of Italian "auteur" cinema's unifying characteristics, see Peter Bondanella, *Italian Cinema from Neorealism to the Present* (New York: Continuum, 1994); Carlo Celli and Marga Cottino-Jones, *A New Guide to Italian Cinema* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); and Millicent Marcus, *After Fellini: Cinema in the Postmodern Age* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002) among others.

⁹ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, translated by Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

¹⁰ See David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989); Frederic Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); and Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Theory* (New York: Verso, 1993).

¹¹ See Bert Cardullo, ed., *Michelangelo Antonioni: Interviews* (Oxford: University Press of Mississippi, 2008).

¹² Gian Piero Brunetta, *Storia del cinema italiano, vol. 4: Dal miracolo economico agli anni novanta, 1960-1993* (Rome: Riuniti, 1993), 89.

¹³ Bondanella, *Italian Cinema*, 197.

¹⁴ Foot, *Milan Since the Miracle*, 78.

¹⁵ Gaia Servadio, *Luchino Visconti: A Biography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1981), 168.

¹⁶ Quoted in Foot, *Milan Since the Miracle*, 78-79.

¹⁷ John Foot, "Cinema and the City: Milan and Luchino Visconti's *Rocco and his Brothers*, (1960)," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 4, no. 2 (1999): 209-235.

¹⁸ Quoted in Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, xxxi.

¹⁹ Alberto Moravia, quoted in *A futura memoria: Pier Paolo Pasolini*, directed by Ivo Barnabo Micheli, 1986.

²⁰ See Laura Betti, *Pier Paolo Pasolini: Chronique Judiciaire, Persecution, Execution* (Paris: Seghers, 1979) for contextualization and analysis of all federal charges issued against Pasolini.

²¹ For a thorough sampling of his critical essays, see Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism; Lutheran Letters*, translated by Stuart Hood (New York: Carcanet Press, 1987); and *Scritti corsari* (Roma: Garzanti, 1975).

²² Ben Lawton, quoted in Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, xxviii.

²³ Cesare Casarino, "Oedipus Exploded: Pasolini and the Myth of Modernization," *October* 59 (Winter, 1992): 31.

²⁴ All quotations of Pasolini in the two preceding paragraphs are from *Heretical Empiricism*. "New Linguistic Questions," 18; "An Article in *L'Espresso*," 23; "Linguistic Diary," 40; "Another Article," 34; "New Linguistic Questions," 4. Ben Lawton, quoted in Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, xxxiii.

²⁵ Pasolini, "To The Reader," in *Heretical Empiricism*, 1.

²⁶ Pasolini, "Two modest proposals for eliminating crime in Italy," in *Lutheran Letters*, 112-113.

²⁷ Wallace P. Sillanpoa, "Pasolini's Gramsci," *MLN* 96, no. 1 (1981): 135. Sillanpoa rightfully suggests that this oppositional response to Gramsci's envisioned egalitarianism had more to do with Pasolini's animosity toward the PCI—which he felt was distorting Gramsci's revolutionary ideas through the passive acceptance of the *status quo*—than with denigrating Gramsci himself.

²⁸ John David Rhodes, *Stupendous, Miserable City: Pasolini's Rome* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007). The *borgata* of Gordiani was built under Fascism to house residents displaced by the *sventramenti* ("disembowelment") of Piazza Venezia. In an article entitled "The Concentration Camps" in the PCI weekly, *Vie Nuove*, (May 1958), Pasolini lamented the similarities in design and function of the new INA Casa housing project, Villa Gordiani, (developed by Christian-Democrat ministers), to Fascist constructions.

²⁹ Marcia Landy, *Italian Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 175. The intertitle is a passage from Canto V. It reads: “. . . l’angel di Dio mi prese, e quell d’inferno gridava: ‘O tu del ciel, perché mi privi? Tut e ne porti di costui l’eterno, per una lagrimetta che l mi toglie. . . .’” [“God’s angel took me up, and he of Hell shouted: ‘O thou from heaven, why dost thou rob me? Thou bearest away the eternal part of him, for one poor little tear, that takes him from me. . . .’”]. In Dante’s *Divina Commedia*, *Purgatorio* begins with Dante and his guide, Virgil, ascending from Hell and arriving on the shores of the island/mountain of Purgatory.

³⁰ Bondanella, *Italian Cinema*, 181.

³¹ Ibid. Among the many allusions to Christ, Bondanella cites how Accattone “dies in the company of two thieves, his larceny is termed ‘divine service,’ and one of his prostitutes is named Magdalene.”

³² Ibid.

³³ Pasolini, “My ‘Accattone’ on TV after the genocide,” in *Lutheran Letters*, 104.

³⁴ Ibid., 100.

³⁵ Ibid., 104.

³⁶ John Agnew, *Geopolitics: Re-visioning World Politics* (London: Routledge, 2003), 48.

³⁷ Gino Moliterno, “Accattone,” *Senses of Cinema*, February 2004. Accessed July 3, 2009. <http://archive.sensesofcinema.com/contents/cteq/04/accattone.html>.

³⁸ Angelo Restivo, *The Cinema of Economic Miracles: Visuality and Modernization in the Italian Art Film* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 77-78. See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, translated by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1980). Foucault states that the transition from prebourgeois to bourgeois culture requires the regulation of childhood, women, and the family, to which Pasolini, in *Comizi d’amore*, clearly adds homosexuality. In “My ‘Accattone’ on TV after the genocide,” Pasolini acknowledged the possibility of his films being construed as complicit in this process, a problematic that eventually led him to focus his artistic works on the premodern and the Third World.

³⁹ Restivo, *Cinema of Economic Miracles*, 79.

⁴⁰ Giuliana Bruno, “Heresies: The Body of Pasolini’s Semiotics,” *Cinema Journal* 30, no. 3 (1991), 39.

⁴¹ The scene entitled, “Debate on the Roman Beaches,” takes place in the coastal town of Ostia, approximately twenty miles southwest of Rome. Milan, of course, is one hundred miles from the nearest coast. In this scene, Pasolini transfers the locational theme of the beach to a public swimming pool. Two of the six scenes are filmed on Tuscan beaches, where Pasolini distinguishes the “Working-Class Beach” from its “Bourgeois” counterpart.

⁴² Restivo, *Cinema of Economic Miracles*, 84.

Chapter 6

¹ *Peplum* is the Latinized version of the Greek “peplos,” referring to a draped tunic cinched at the waist worn by men in ancient times. In the peplum films, the outfit is considerably “modernized” to highlight the physical attributes of both male and female protagonists. Spaghetti westerns are also known as *western all’italiana* and *western-spaghetti*.

² For a distinction between the Italian use of *popular* and *mass* culture see footnote 1, chapter 5. This differentiation becomes problematic in the 1960s, as the two terms clearly merge in a discussion of certain genre

cinema. It must be noted that the extraordinary longevity of these genres was also driven by their international success, especially in the Global South of Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia.

³ Christopher Wagstaff, "A Forkful of Westerns: Industry, Audiences, and the Italian Western," in *Popular European Cinema*, eds. Richard Dyer and Ginette Vincendeau (London: Routledge, 1992), 251.

⁴ Christopher Frayling, *Sergio Leone* (London: Faber and Faber, 2000), 83.

⁵ This is true particularly of the peplum films. In the last two decades, numerous scholars have produced works on spaghetti westerns that contextualize their relationship to sociocultural and political change in the 1960s. See, for example, Antonio Bruschini and Antonio Tentori, *Western all'italiana, Vol. 1: The Specialists* (Firenze: Glittering Images, 1998); Antonio Bruschini and Federico de Zigno, *Western all'italiana, Vol. 2: the Wild, the Sadist, and the Outsiders* (Firenze: Glittering Images, 2001), and *Western all'italiana, Vol. 3: 100 More Must-See Movies* (Firenze: Glittering Images, 2006); Christopher Frayling, *Spaghetti Westerns: Cowboys and Europeans from Karl May to Sergio Leone* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1981), and *Sergio Leone*; and Thomas Weisser, *Spaghetti Westerns: the Good, the Bad and the Violent — 558 Eurowesterns and Their Personnel, 1961–1977* (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland, 1992).

⁶ Giuseppe Ghigi, *La memoria inquieta: Cinema e resistenza* (Venezia: Libreria Editrice Cafoscarina, 2009), 187.

⁷ Domenico Cammarota, *Il cinema Peplum: la prima guida critica ai film di Conan, Ercole, Goliath, Maciste, Sansone, Spartaco, Thaur, Ursus* (Roma: Fanucci, 1987).

⁸ Pagano's identity became so absorbed by his cinematic character that he legally changed his name to Maciste. The silent-era vehicles placed Maciste in ever-changing scenarios and locations. During World War I, he was frequently a soldier fighting the "just cause" against tyranny. After the war, he appeared in more generic fantasies set in the distant past, the present, and the afterlife. With the rise of Fascism in the mid-1920s, Maciste acquired a nationalist slant in the form of Olympic athlete and, ultimately, emperor.

⁹ Frayling, *Sergio Leone*, 83.

¹⁰ Patrick Lucanio, *With Fire and Sword* (Trenton, NJ: Scarecrow, 1994), 12-13. Several factors contributed to this injection of capital into the Italian film industry. In the late 1950s, Hollywood began to suffer from a tightening of credit and a simultaneous rise in production costs. Genre films required considerably less capital. The favorable exchange rate, limited audience expectations for technological prowess and costly innovation, and perpetual reuse of studio sets, costumes, and props allowed genre films to be made quickly and cheaply. American coproduction generally followed the model established by Levine: They spent more on promotion than on the product itself.

¹¹ Frayling, *Sergio Leone*, 82. The basic argument of *The Society to Protect Italian Musclemen* was that if physique rather than acting ability was the determining factor in peplum casting, then Italians could play these parts just as well as foreigners.

¹² Maggie Günsberg, *Italian Cinema: Gender and Genre* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 101.

¹³ As noted above, this initial phase of American domination, in reality, transformed more than it ended. Focus merely shifted from distribution of American films to coproduction of "Italian" features intended for national and international markets. The contribution of capital to Italian film production was also a form of political appeasement that enabled producers from the U. S. to take advantage of the relatively low costs of making "American" films at Cinecittà.

¹⁴ This is an obvious function of geography, given German proximity to the North and the concentration of Mussolini's support base in the northeast (the Republic of Salò).

¹⁵ Günsberg, *Italian Cinema*, 101.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹⁷ Domenico Paoletta, "La Psicoanalisi dei Poveri," *Midi-Minuit Fantastique* (May 12, 1965), 8-9.

¹⁸ *Banditi a Orgosolo* was nominated for the Golden Lion award at the Venice Film Festival in 1961, where De Seta won for "Best First Work." The film also received the Silver award for Best Black-and-White Cinematography in 1962 from the Italian National Syndicate of Film Journalists. *Salvatore Giuliano* won this same accolade in 1963, along with Best Director and Best Score.

¹⁹ Cesare Zavattini, "A Thesis on Neorealism," in *Springtime in Italy: A Reader on Neorealism*, ed. David Overbey (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1979), 72.

²⁰ Angelo Restivo, "The Economic Miracle and Its Discontents: Bandit Films in Spain and Italy," *Film Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (1995-6): 31.

²¹ Eric Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (London: Pelican, 1972), 77.

²² Peter Bondanella, *Italian Cinema from Neorealism to the Present* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 167. The *Arma dei Carabinieri* is the national gendarmerie of Italy. Formed in the early nineteenth century by Victor Emmanuel I of Savoy, the *carabinieri* are in charge of law enforcement for both the military and the civilian populations. The organization was the main force utilized during the Liberal Period to squash brigandage in the South, which partly explains their continued image as foreign occupiers throughout the region.

²³ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 23.

²⁴ Angelo Restivo, *The Cinema of Economic Miracles: Visuality and Modernization in the Italian Art Film* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 50.

²⁵ Bondanella, *Italian Cinema*, 168.

²⁶ Most historical accounts of Italian cinema consider this number to be accurate. Claudio Carabba, however, identifies fewer than ten Italian films prior to *Per un pugno di dollari* that entertain "western" history, iconography, or ideology. Claudio Carabba, "Il western-spaghetti," in *Prima della rivoluzione: Schermi italiani 1960-1969*, ed. Claver Salizzato (Venizia: Marsilio, 1989): 77-88. *Per un pugno di dollari* became the highest-grossing Italian film of all time (as of 1964), before being superseded by its sequel, *Per qualche dollaro in più* (For a Few Dollars More, 1965). Between 1964 and 1971, the films collectively grossed over eight billion lire worldwide.

²⁷ Christopher Wagstaff, "Cinema," in *Italian Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, eds. David Forgacs and Robert Lumley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 224. Gian Piero Brunetta has estimated the total production of spaghetti westerns between 1964-1974 to be closer to eight hundred; however, this includes films made for television as well. Gian Piero Brunetta, *Storia del cinema italiano, vol. 4: Dal miracolo economico agli anni novanta, 1960-1993* (Rome: Riuniti, 1993), 403.

²⁸ The most notable users of pseudonyms were Sergio Leone, credited as "Bob Robertson" for *Per un pugno di dollari*, and Mario Girotti and Carlo Pedersoli as "Terence Hill" and "Bud Spencer," respectively. Although Leone shed his alias following the success of *Per un pugno di dollari*, Girotti and Pedersoli retained their assumed names for their entire careers. Lists of spaghetti western pseudonyms can be found in Frayling, *Spaghetti Westerns*, 1981, Massimo Moscati, *Western all'italian: guida ai 407 film, ai registi, agli attori* (Milano: Pan Editrice, 1978), and Weisser, *Spaghetti Westerns*, 1992.

²⁹ The *Man with No Name* trilogy consists of *Un pugno di dollari*, *Per qualche dollaro in più*, and *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* (The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly, 1966).

³⁰ Frayling, *Spaghetti Westerns*, 43.

³¹ Lino Miccichè, *Il cinema italiano degli anni '60* (Venizia: Marsilio, 1976). Cited in Frayling, *Spaghetti Westerns*, 55.

³² Frayling, *Spaghetti Westerns*, 54.

³³ Paolella, "La Psicoanalisi dei Poveri," 7-8. Giuseppe Saragat, the long-standing leader of the *Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano* (Italian Democratic Socialist Party, PSDI), served as president from 1964 until 1971. John Agnew provides evidence of the nationwide increase in Communist votes between 1963 and 1976 in his book, *Place and Politics in Modern Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

³⁴ Will Wright, *Sixguns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975). Although numerous scholars have criticized Wright's structuralist explanation of the western's popularity, they generally accept his plot categorizations. For theoretical discussion of the history and semiology of the Hollywood Western, see André Bazin, "Le Western," in *Qu'est-ce Que Le Cinema, Vol. III, Cinema et Sociologie* (Paris: Editions de Cerf, 1961); John G. Cawelti, *The Six-Gun Mystique* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1984); Philip French, *Westerns: Aspects of a Movie Genre* (New York: Viking Press, 1974); and Jack Nachbar, ed., *Focus on the Western* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974). Frayling, *Spaghetti Westerns*, 1981, provides a thorough summation of this literature.

³⁵ Wright, *Sixguns and Society*, 32. Whereas the subjects of the classical plot vary from Indian wars, the building of the railroad, outlaws, the cavalry, lawmen, cowboys, and cattle kings to gunfighters and bounty hunters, Wright suggests that they are united by a clear ideological victory of good over evil.

³⁶ Frayling, *Spaghetti Westerns*, 53-56.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 50.

³⁸ Frayling, Sergio Leone, and Oreste De Fornari, *Sergio Leone: The Great Italian Dream of Legendary America* (Rome: Gremese, 1997). This pastiche of western iconography led the French theorist, Jean Baudrillard, to label Leone as "the first postmodern director." Cited in Frayling, *Sergio Leone*, xiv.

³⁹ Bondanella, *Italian Cinema*, 263.

⁴⁰ Frayling, *Sergio Leone*, 126.

⁴¹ The label "Zapata-spaghettis" is a reference to Emiliano Zapata, the hero of the peasantry during the Mexican Revolution. The title of Leone's film, *Per un pugno di dollari* (A Fistful of Dollars), is derived from a famous quotation from Zapata: "*Muchos de ellos por complacer a los tiranos, por un puñado de monedas o por cohechos o soborno, están derramando la sangre de sus hermanos.*" ["Many of them, so as to curry favor with tyrants, for a fistful of coins or for reward or bribe, are shedding the blood of their brothers."]

⁴² Bondanella, *Italian Cinema*, 268.

⁴³ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, translated by Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin Classics, 1993), 442. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).

⁴⁴ Jon May and Nigel Thrift, eds., *Timespace: Geographies of Temporality* (London: Routledge, 2001), 7.

⁴⁵ Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 23.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁴⁷ Luigi Barzini, *The Italians* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 190.

⁴⁸ Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 493.

⁴⁹ It is inaccurate to suggest that Italian social critics of the 1960s articulated the South as a postcolonial space according to the framework in which it is now theorized (as derived from Edward Said's *Orientalism*, among others). However, the foundational works of postcolonial thought by Aimé Césaire, Franz Fanon, and Albert Memmi influenced Italians such as Pier Paolo Pasolini, Sergio Sollima, Franco Solinas, Alberto Moravia, and Marco Ferreri who correlated the historical development of the South with that of colonized Africa and Latin America. As opposed to being defined by temporal divisions based on political independence, these writers argued that the South was rendered *postcolonial* by a lessening of interest in its sociocultural incorporation at the national level, which was being replaced by a growing concern for its economic subservience to global capital.

⁵⁰ Günsberg, *Italian Cinema*, 210.

⁵¹ Quoted in Frayling, *Spaghetti Westerns*, 232.

⁵² Günsberg, *Italian Cinema*, 210.

⁵³ Along with "A Fistful of Dynamite," *Giù la testa* is also known as "Duck, You Sucker!" in the U. S. and U. K. Leone originally wanted the film to be called *C'era una volta il rivoluzione* (Once Upon a Time, the Revolution) in order to reference his earlier work, *C'era una volta il West*, and to similarly posit that the standard interpretation of the Mexican Revolution, like that of the American West, was equivalent to a fairy tale.

⁵⁴ Frayling, *Spaghetti Westerns*, 233.

⁵⁵ Leone's main objection was that the Zapata films required viewers to be acutely aware of contemporary Italian politics in order to digest the iconic references and ideological messages. He concluded that political rhetoric actually discouraged cinematic engagement since only the "spectators who were already aware of the problem" could "make sense" of the story line. Quoted in Frayling, *Sergio Leone*, 306.

⁵⁶ Pierre Baudry, "L'idéologie du western italien," *Cahiers du Cinéma*, no. 233 (November, 1971): 55-56.

⁵⁷ James Roy MacBean, *Film and Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), 149.

⁵⁸ Jean-Luc Godard, quoted in MacBean, *Film and Revolution*, 155.

⁵⁹ The comic spaghetthis have an American parallel in Mel Brooks's film, *Blazing Saddles* (1974).

⁶⁰ Adjusted for inflation, . . . *continuavano a chiamarlo Trinità* remained the fifth highest-grossing Italian film of all time, as of 1999. Roberto Rombi, "La vita è bella regina d'incassi," *La Repubblica* (December 29, 1999), 47. Accessed October 9, 2009. <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/1999/12/29/la-vita-bella-regina-incassi.html>.

⁶¹ The violent political conflicts that erupted between the New Left and the Neofascist movement in the late 1960s were originally referred to as *opposti estremismi* (Opposite Extremisms).

⁶² Gillo Pontecorvo, quoted in Frayling, *Spaghetti Westerns*, 242.

Chapter 7

¹ The worker strikes of 1969, which concentrated in the factories and city centers of the Northwest's industrial triangle, were the first in a series of organized labor protests that continued throughout the 1970s. Known as *autunno caldo* (Hot Autumn), the strikes began in September at the Pirelli plant in Turin. The company had imported tires from Greece after locking out its workers who were demanding wage increases.

² Luigi Barzini, *The Italians* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 221.

³ Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943-1988* (New York: Penguin, 1990). Cited in Christopher Frayling, *Sergio Leone* (London: Faber and Faber, 2000), 306.

⁴ John Agnew, *Place and Politics in Modern Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 100. Agnew has divided the postwar period into three distinct segments: The Regionalizing Regime (1947-1963), in which the DC and PCI solidified their bases in Northeast and Central Italy, respectively; the Nationalizing Regime (1963-1976), wherein interest shifted to the competitive areas of the Northwest and the South, and the parties increased their positions of national hegemony—the DC as the majority party and the PCI as the largest minority party; and the Localizing Regime (1976-1992), characterized by “the geographical retreat and political disintegration of the DC and PCI.”

⁵ See David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) for a detailed discussion of the historical development and consequences of neoliberalism. Harvey has suggested that the 1973-1974 stock market crash and OPEC oil shocks effectively mark the beginning of this philosophy’s hegemony and the onset of the economic, technological, and cultural mechanisms alluded to by the term “globalization.” Whereas “neocapitalism” is the generic term used to define the Italian development model in the postwar period, “embedded liberalism” provides a more relevant contrast to neoliberalism. Embedded liberalism refers to the dominant economic system of Western nations from post-World War II until the early 1970s in which “market processes and entrepreneurial and corporate activities were surrounded by a web of social and political constraints and a regulatory environment that sometimes restrained but in other instances led the way in economic and industrial strategy.” Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 11.

⁶ Frayling, *Sergio Leone*, 477.

⁷ Christopher Wagstaff, “Cinema,” in *Italian Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, eds. David Forgacs and Robert Lumley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 218.

⁸ Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics*. Percentages derived from the Statistical Appendix, 427-455.

⁹ Giovanni Bechelloni, “Italy,” The Museum of Broadcast Communications. Accessed October 17, 2009. <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/I/htmlI/italy/italy.htm>

¹⁰ Wagstaff, “Cinema,” 225.

¹¹ The quotation, attributed to Mussolini, is a citation of Leon Trotsky’s statement that cinema is: “the most important weapon, which cries out to be used, [and] is the best instrument for . . . a propaganda which is accessible to everyone, cuts into the memory and may be made a possible source of revenue.” Leon Trotsky, “Vodka, the Church, and the Cinema,” *Pravda* (July 12, 1923).

¹² Valle d’Aosta, Trentino-Alto Adige, Sardinia, and Sicily were authorized as special statute regions in 1948; Friuli-Venezia Giulia received the same designation in 1963. These five regions are considered “special” because they are islands (Sicily, Sardinia) or less-populated regions that contain significant linguistic minorities (Valle d’Aosta, Trentino-Alto Adige, Friuli-Venezia Giulia). These regions have greater autonomy than their “ordinary” counterparts.

¹³ Article 117 of the Constitution outlines the regional powers initially devised in 1948. These included the authority to determine location, financing, and institutional structure of physical planning, agriculture, social services, and cultural promotion. Law 281 (1970) and Decrees 1 through 11 (1972) established specific limits to each of these categories. Law 382 (1975) and Decree 616 (1977) greatly expanded regional jurisdiction to include some regulatory power over labor markets and small enterprises in the private industrial sector, and determination of municipal and regional taxation policy.

¹⁴ In 2001, the government greatly expanded regional autonomy by granting regions the power to deliver health, educational, transportation, and welfare services. A bill signed in 2008 extended federalist principles to the three levels of subnational government—region, province, and commune—by creating a quota system for income tax and value-added tax redistribution. This form of fiscal federalism is meant to appease northern regions through a decrease in “equalization payments” made to the South. Southern regions will be allowed to keep a larger percentage of their internally generated tax dollars.

¹⁵ The impossibility of a unifying cultural identity at the national level would come to head in the 2000s with the rise of the Lega Nord (Northern League) and the *Movimento per le Autonomie* (Movement for Autonomies)—antagonistic and xenophobic political parties of the North and South, respectively, that consistently threatened to secede from the nation.

¹⁶ Arnaldo Bagnasco, *Tre Italie: La problematica dello sviluppo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1977).

¹⁷ See Enzo Mingione, “The Resurgence of Regionalism,” *International Affairs* 69, no. 2 (April, 1993): 305-318 and Kevin Stannard, “How Many Italies? Process and Scale in the Development of the Italian Space Economy,” *Geography* 84, no. 4 (1999): 308-318.

¹⁸ Agnew, *Place and Politics*, 95-96. Agnew has delineated *la zona bianca* as “the provinces of Bergamo and Brescia in Lombardy, the province of Trento, the province of Udine, and all of the Veneto except the province of Rovigo,” while *la zona rossa* comprises “the provinces of Mantova, Rovigo and Viterbo; the whole of Emilia-Romagna except the province of Piacenza; Tuscany except for Lucca (an *isola bianca*); Umbria; and the Marche region except the province of Ascoli Piceno.”

¹⁹ Antonio Negri, “Between ‘Historic Compromise’ and Terrorism: Reviewing the Experience of Italy in the 1970s,” *Le Monde Diplomatique* 9 (1998). Translated by Ed Emery. Accessed October 20, 2009. <http://mondediplo.com/1998/09/11negri>.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film* (New York: Verso, 2002), 31.

²³ Palmiro Togliatti was the leader of the PCI from 1927 to 1964.

²⁴ Peter Bondanella, *Italian Cinema from Neorealism to the Present* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 187.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 184.

²⁸ Quoted in Christopher Frayling, *Spaghetti Westerns: Cowboys and Europeans from Karl May to Sergio Leone* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1981), 242-243.

²⁹ Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, “Towards a Third Cinema: Notes and Experiences for the Development of a Cinema of Liberation in the Third World,” in *Movies and Methods: An Anthology*, Vol. 1, ed. Bill Nichols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976): 44-64.

³⁰ This reflected Jean-Luc Godard's assessment that critical European director's of the political left had become "trapped inside the fortress" of bourgeois economy and forms of representation in their quest to reach mass audiences.

³¹ Ibid., 51.

³² Catherine L. Benamou, "Third Cinema," *Film Reference*. Accessed October 23, 2009. <http://www.filmreference.com/encyclopedia/Romantic-Comedy-Yugoslavia/Third-Cinema.html>.

³³ Amos Vogel, *Film as a Subversive Art* (New York: Random House, 1975).

³⁴ See Scott L. Baugh, "Manifesting La Historia: Systems of 'Development' and the New Latin American Cinema Manifesto," *Film and History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies* 34, no. 1 (2004): 56-64; Ngwarsungu Chiwengo, "Memory, Ideology, and Exile: J. M. Kibushi's Mwana Mboka," *Reconstruction* 8, no. 2 (2008); Frieda Ekotto and Adeline Koh, eds., *Rethinking Third Cinema: The Role of Anti-Colonial Media and Aesthetics in Postmodernity* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2009); Nicola Marzano, "Third Cinema Today," *Offscreen Journal* 13, no. 6 (2009); Glen M. Mimura, *Ghostlife of Third Cinema: Asian American Film and Video* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); Lúcia Nagib, "Reframing Utopia: Contemporary Brazilian Cinema at the Turn of the Century," *P: Portuguese Cultural Studies* 0 (Winter 2006): 25-35; James Neil, "Third Cinema and the World: Some Stations on the Journey," *Vertigo* 3, no. 9 (2008); Onookome Okome, "Introducing the Special Issue on West African Cinema: Africa at the Movies," *Postcolonial Text* 3, no. 2 (2007); and Antonio D. Sison, "3rd World Hero: Rizal and Colonial Clerical Power Through the Lens of Philippine Third Cinema," *Senses of Cinema* 36 (2005).

³⁵ Solanas and Getino, "Towards a Third Cinema," 47.

³⁶ Ibid.; Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, translated by Ben Lawton and Louise K. Barnett (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), xxxvi.

³⁷ Franco Cassano, *Il Pensiero meridiano* (Bari: Laterza, 1996).

³⁸ Cited in Ugo Rossi, "New Regionalism Contested: Some Remarks in Light of the Case of the Mezzogiorno in Italy," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 28, no. 2 (2004), 468.

³⁹ For specific examples of new southern films and filmmakers, see Abele Longo, "Palermo in the Films of Ciprì and Maresco," in *Italian Cityscapes: Culture and Urban Change in Contemporary Italy*, eds. Robert Lumley and John Foot (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2004: 185-195).

⁴⁰ Lucio Levi, "Italy's Fiscal Devolution Moves it Towards Federalism," *Federations* 8, no. 1 (2009). Accessed October 27, 2009. http://www.forumfed.org/en/products/magazine/vol8_num1/italy.php.

⁴¹ Giuseppe di Lampedusa, *Il Gattopardo* (Milano: Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore, 1958), 28.

Appendix

Notes on Selecting and Reading Films

To produce this dissertation, I conducted a critical analysis or “reading” of ninety-seven films, newsreels, and documentaries, the majority of which are listed in the Filmography that follows. The selection process was straightforward. My focus on the postwar years through 1975 determined the primary delineation, with the exception of Fascist-era films from the 1930s. My interest in five specific genres—neorealism, *commedia all’italiana*, interrogative auteur cinema, peplum, and spaghetti westerns—further reduced the pool. The genres themselves were chosen based on two elementary characteristics: By definition, their subject matter addresses differences between the Italian North and South, and/or they constitute the most popular genres (i.e. those with the greatest number of viewers and box-office returns) of their specific time periods.

Working from several filmographies produced by film historians and theorists (in English and Italian), I created a master list of films from the aforementioned genres that also met temporal boundaries based on each genre’s period of greatest popularity. I defined such periods via the years of highest film production, audience viewership/box-office revenue, and national/international awards and acclaim. This list totaled just over five hundred works. I reduced it based on which works met at least one of three criteria: they were one of the top-ten domestic grossing films of their respective years; they were productions by the State (e.g. the INCOM and LUCE newsreels); or they or their directors inspired official responses (usually of a damning or critical variety) by the State. Preference was given to films that met more than one criteria.

I obtained the majority of films for viewing from commonplace outlets such as libraries and rental companies. Other films were purchased from retail establishments, and a few (especially newsreels) were viewed online via the RAI and LUCE electronic archives.

My analysis of the ninety-seven films included multiple steps and methodologies. I first watched them as any casual observer would—as a continuous act from start to finish, done without taking notes or stopping the performance. As a nonnative Italian speaker, this first viewing included watching the film with subtitles (when available). Afterwards, I would record my general impressions and write a brief synopsis of the plot. I then determined the relevance of the film's content and subject matter to my overall inquiry into Italian regionalism, nationalism, and place representation. This decision largely was based on the degree to which central issues of postwar development and nation-building were engaged in each work. Films set in the South and/or those that presented discussions of southern society, mores, and migration were identified for further examination. So were those dealing with changes in morality, urban versus rural landscapes, contestations of hegemonic structures (e.g. Christian-Democratic envisionments of the modern nation), and the effects of modernization. This process reduced the sample to fifty-three films, newsreels, and documentaries.

My second viewing of the smaller sample involved a semiotic analysis centered on the identification and description of visual iconography. In this instance, I focused on ways that environmental settings were presented in the film. I developed a set of questions concerning the depiction of landscape that could be repeated from sequence to sequence and film to film. These included: Does the scene take place inside or outside? Is the setting urban or rural? Is there any clear indication of place location (i.e. North or South, Milan or Turin)? Is landscape active or passive?—meaning, does the environment have an active effect on the actions of the characters

or is it merely a backdrop? Is the space populated or empty? What are the dominant iconic symbols of the landscape? For example, if the location is urban, are buildings, vehicles, billboards, and roads emphasized over other visual signs?

When possible, I extended semiotic analysis during the second viewing to document the portrayal of characters. Sometimes this required a separate third viewing. I devised a similar set of questions for this: Are characters distinguished by their appearances? If so, what clothing, facial hair, or accoutrements differentiate people from different social and economic classes? What aspects of physical appearance are meant to differentiate northerners from southerners, peasants from urbanites? Are the particularities of appearance intended to convey the social standing or place of origin of a character?

Subsequent viewings (sometimes to a total of eight) centered on contextual, or qualitative content analysis of the films. One aspect of this followed traditional film theory and criticism methodology, the documentation of technical aspects of production such as shot construction and focal length, *mise-en-scene*, editing, diegetic and nondiegetic sound, and pacing. Concerning plot construction, narrative function, and authorial intent of each film, I then supplemented my insights with interpretations offered by previous film reviews and criticism both contemporaneous to a film's release and retrospective.

Conclusions pertaining to the intended messages of the films were greatly enhanced both by the utilization of existing literature produced by film critics and historians and by explications of the directors themselves. Visconti, Rosi, Pasolini, Leone, Antonioni, De Sica, and De Seta all are the subjects of autobiographies and/or biographies plus documentaries in which these artists discussed the themes, motivations, ideological messages, and social, economic, and political

criticism within their films. My comments on recurrent allusions to Dante's *Purgatorio* in Pasolini's films, for example, are rendered more credible by the director's documented admission of such intended references in his films.

Given my overarching interest in contextualizing film as a product of specific cultural and political undercurrents during postwar development, I relied on standard accounts of modern Italian history to enframe my analysis of the social conditions in which films and genres were produced. For example, Paul Ginsborg's discussion in *A History of Contemporary Italy* of the realistic and valorizing treatment of the Roman peripheral landscape in Pasolini's *Accattone* added credence to my examination of the urban periphery as a targeted "site of exclusion" in Italy's modernization. Ginsborg has documented how the visual imagery of the Roman *borgata* in the film was reprinted and used in protests against the perceived misappropriation of tenement construction funds in the capital city. Similarly, John Foot, in *Milan Since the Miracle* has documented how *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* created such an uproar in Milan over the impoverished and disintegrated conditions of migrant neighborhoods that the city council subsequently set aside special funds for increased services to these areas.

Ultimately, rather than relying on any singular methodology, I did as Gillian Rose suggests in *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials* and "mixed methods." What has worked for me has been described as a "close reading" of film, "close" being synonymous with humanistic. Jeffrey Bardzell has defined this approach nicely:

A close reading doesn't involve a set methodology and as such it is very hard to describe. . . . But the gist of this sort of approach is that an expert (which I will leave undefined here) engages with a text with great care. This engagement typically entails a number of activities: multiple readings/viewings of the text; situating the text in its social and historical contexts; deconstructing the text using a variety of critical strategies (e.g., from Marxism, feminism, poststructuralism,

postmodernism, structuralism, reception theory, psychoanalysis); bringing to bear what, if anything, everyone else has said about that text, including interviews with the author/creator, its critical tradition, similar texts (e.g., by the same author/creator); and so forth. Note that this sort of approach is holistic and relies for its success on the expertise of the expert doing it; it is unique, individual, and subjective; it does not follow any disembodied abstract methodology but rather the logic of the scholar-expert in whose hands it is being executed.¹

My aim has been to balance my subjective and personal reading of the films with a (fairly) objective historical narrative that incorporates statistical data and analysis in an attempt to explain regional specificity. In a way, my approach exhibits a “betweenness” similar to that of chorology, which has been described “as being located on an intellectual continuum *between* science and art, or as offering a form of understanding that is *between* description and explanation.”² My contextualist analysis deviates from traditional chorology, of course, in its “emphasis on the study of space and society rather than on nature and society,” and its emphasis on “theory and an explicit concern with meaning.”³

In analyses of place representation, separating science and art is a foolhardy endeavor. Art cannot evolve and continue to comment on and construct historical moments without utilizing or deconstructing technology and scientific innovation. Yet, science cannot enable itself, and its conclusions require mass communication to expand human knowledge. Generating desirable actions and fostering change requires more than the bare transmission of facts and numbers. Cultural translation is needed. In the world today, this intersection of scientific explication and artistic expression occurs predominantly through visual media.

¹ Jeffrey, Bardzell, “Discourse Analysis vs. Close Reading,” *Interaction Culture: Musings on Interaction Design and Culture*. <http://interactionculture.wordpress.com/2009/03/24/discourse-analysis-vs-close-reading/>

² J. Nicholas Entrikin, “The Betweenness of Place,” in *Reading Human Geography: The Poetics and Politics of Inquiry*, eds. Trevor Barnes and Derek Gregory (London: Arnold, 1997), 303.

³ Ibid., 305.

Filmography

Note: Films are listed according to their Italian title. Titles in parentheses indicate American/English/International release titles (in italics), or translations (in roman type). Each citation also includes director(s), original production company or companies, and year of Italian release.

Accattone. Pier Paolo Pasolini. Cino del Duca /Arco Film, 1961.

Aurora sul mare (Dawn on the Sea). Giorgio Simonelli. Manenti Film, 1934.

L'avventura (*The Adventure*). Michelangelo Antonioni. Cino del Duca /PCE /Lyre, 1960.

I bambini ci guardano (*The Children Are Watching Us*). Vittorio De Sica. Scalera /Invicta, 1944.

Banditi a Orgosolo (*Bandits of Orgosolo*). Vittorio De Seta. Titanus, 1960.

La battaglia di Algeri (*The Battle of Algiers*). Gillo Pontecorvo. Igor Film /Casbah Film, 1966.

Blazing Saddles. Mel Brooks. Crossbow Productions /Warner Brothers Pictures, 1974.

Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo (*The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*). Sergio Leone. PEA /Constantin, 1966.

Cabiria. Giovanni Pastrone. Itala Film, 1914.

Caccia tragica (The Tragic Hunt). Giuseppe De Santis. ANPI /Dante Film, 1947.

Camicia nera (Black Shirt). Giovacchino Forzano. LUCE, 1933.

C'era una volta il West (*Once Upon a Time in the West*). Sergio Leone. Rafran /Finanzia San Marco /Paramount Pictures, 1968.

Lo chiamavano Trinità (*They Call Me Trinity*). Enzo Barboni. West Film, 1970.

Comizi d'amore (Love Meetings). Pier Paolo Pasolini. Arco Film, 1965.

Condottieri (*Giovanni de Medici: The Leader*). Luis Trenker and Werner Klingler. ENIC, 1937.

... continuavano a chiamarlo Trinità (*Trinity is STILL My Name!*). Enzo Barboni. West Film, 1971.

Cristo si è fermato a Eboli (Christ Stopped at Eboli). Francesco Rosi. Vides /RAI /Action, 1979.

Darò un milione (I'll Give a Million). Mario Camerini. Novella Film, 1935.

1860 (*Gesuzza the Garibaldian Wife*). Alessandro Blasetti. Cinès /Steffano Pittaluga Films, 1934.

Divorzio all'italiana (Divorce, Italian-Style). Pietro Germi. Lux /Galatea /Vides, 1961.

Django. Sergio Corbucci. BRC /Tecisa, 1966.

La dolce vita (*The Sweet Life*). Federico Fellini. Riama /Pathé Consortium /Gray-Film, 1960.

Il dottor Antonio (*Doctor Antonio*). Enrico Guazzoni. Manderfilm, 1938.

Ecce bomba (Behold the Bomb). Nanni Moretti. Filmalpha, 1978.

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